

# **Admin Tools User's Guide**

**Nicholas K. Dionysopoulos**

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Nicholas K. Dionysopoulos

Publication date January 2011

## Abstract

This book covers the use of the Admin Tools site security component, module and plugin bundle for Joomla!™ - powered web sites. Both the free Admin Tools Core and the subscription-based Admin Tools Professional editions are completely covered.

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# Chapter 1. Getting Started

## 1. What is Admin Tools?

Admin Tools is a software bundle composed of a Joomla! component, a module and a plugin with the main objective to enhance the security and performance of your site, as well as make the site administrator's life a bit easier by automating common tasks.

Admin Tools uses a native Joomla! component and plugin and is 100% compatible with Joomla! 1.5, Joomla! 1.6, Molajo and Nooku Server. No need to touch php.ini files, no need to perform any kind of server-side configuration and no need to modify or move core Joomla! files.

In a nutshell, Admin Tools has the following features:

- Joomla! core updater [updating-joomla], to keep your Joomla! installation up-to-date. If you have Akeeba Backup 3.1 or later installed, it can automatically backup your site before updating it. An icon in your administrator's control panel page will make sure that you will never forget an update.
- Permissions fixer [fixing-permissions], so that you are never caught with files or directories with 0777 permissions. You can even customize the permissions per directory or even per file.
- Administrator password protection [admin-pw-protection], to add an extra layer of password protection before anyone can access your administrator area
- Administrator query string protection, so that your administrator area is only visible if someone uses a secret URL parameter, i.e. <http://www.example.com/administrator?secret> (Professional release only, part of the Web Application Firewall [web-application-firewall])
- .htaccess maker [htaccess-maker], allowing you to tailor a .htaccess file for your site which enhances your site's security and blocks out virtually all fingerprinting and the most common exploit attacks (Professional release only).
- Emergency Off-Line Mode [emergency-offline-mode], which *really* puts your site off-line, unlike Joomla!'s off-line feature which simply hides the component output.
- Web application firewall [web-application-firewall], with several key features (Professional release only):
  - Allow access to the administrator area only on specific IPs or blocks of IP addresses
  - Disallow access to your site on specific IPs or blocks of IP addresses (IP blacklisting)
  - Anti-spam based on a customizable list of words
  - SQLi Shield, dodging many SQL injection attacks
  - Malicious User Agent filtering
  - CSRF / Anti-Spam (reverse CAPTCHA) protection
  - Bad Behaviour (including full support for Project Honeypot IP blacklisting) integration
  - Geographic Blocking: block site visitors based on the country or continent they come from
  - Automatic block for IPs repeatedly triggering security exceptions
  - DFI (Direct file inclusion) detection

- Uploads scanner (UploadShield) blocks uploaded files with suspicious names or containing PHP code anywhere inside them
- Protection against the most common XSS attacks (XSSShield)
- Several options to obscure the fact that your server uses PHP and Joomla!
- Disable Joomla! hidden features useful only for debugging sites which can be used for fingerprinting attacks
- One-click repair and optimisation of database tables [database-tools]
- Sessions purge [database-tools]
- Temporary directory cleaner [cleantmp]
- Scheduled maintenance operations [system-plugin] (session table optimisation, session purge, cache expiration, cache purge) without the need of a CRON job (Professional release only)
- Custom URL redirections [url-redirection] (Professional release only)
- Link migration, i.e. automatically rewrite URLs pointing to an old domain to point to the new domain, extremely useful after migrating your site from one domain to another or from one directory to another.
- Email notification of successful administrator area log-ins (Professional release only)
- Password-protect [password-protecting-admintools] any combination of features you want before handing the site over to your client
- Integration with Joomla! 1.6 ACL and custom, per-user ACL for Joomla! 1.5

The entire bundle is licensed under the GNU General Public License (GPL) version 3 or - at your option - any later version published by the Free Software Foundation. In plain English this means that you can install it on an unlimited number of domains and for as long as you want. We strongly believe that Freedom and security must go hand in hand for either to be effective.

## Note

Unless explicitly stated, the listed features are available in both the Professional and Core releases

## 1.1. Disclaimer

Security applications —like Admin Tools— are designed to simply enhance your site's security, not make it invulnerable against all hacking attempts. Whereas it will make it harder for a potential attacker to figure out information pertaining your site and will give them a hard time attacking your site, there is nothing that can stop a determined cracker from hacking your site. For instance, if you have an outdated Joomla! installation or a vulnerable component installed on your site there is nothing —and, let us stress that, **NOTHING**— which can stop a hacker from successfully attacking your site. We are aware that other developers market their products as a "complete protection" for your site, which simply is technically impossible.

Let me try giving you an example. Think of a bulletproof vest worn by military personnel worldwide. Can these servicemen still get killed? Yes, they can. While the bulletproof vest protects them against the most common attacks (direct shots aimed at the torso) it doesn't protect them from shots coming sideways, high-power close range shots or explosions. It's the same with security software, they are nothing but bulletproof vests. They will block most common attacks but can't catch them all. A determined cracker is like a suicide bomber: if he decides to get you, there's only that much you can do to protect yourself.

You are ultimately responsible for the security of your site, employing sane security practices. Installing and configuring Admin Tools is nothing but one of such practices. At the very least you are expected to take frequent backups, stored in safe locations outside of your server, and keep an eye for any abnormal behaviour on your site.

Finally, we are legally obliged to draw your attention to the warranty and liability waiver Sections 15 through 17 of the software's license, copied here for your convenience:

## **15. Disclaimer of Warranty.**

THERE IS NO WARRANTY FOR THE PROGRAM, TO THE EXTENT PERMITTED BY APPLICABLE LAW. EXCEPT WHEN OTHERWISE STATED IN WRITING THE COPYRIGHT HOLDERS AND/OR OTHER PARTIES PROVIDE THE PROGRAM "AS IS" WITHOUT WARRANTY OF ANY KIND, EITHER EXPRESSED OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, THE IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY AND FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. THE ENTIRE RISK AS TO THE QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE OF THE PROGRAM IS WITH YOU. SHOULD THE PROGRAM PROVE DEFECTIVE, YOU ASSUME THE COST OF ALL NECESSARY SERVICING, REPAIR OR CORRECTION.

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## **17. Interpretation of Sections 15 and 16.**

If the disclaimer of warranty and limitation of liability provided above cannot be given local legal effect according to their terms, reviewing courts shall apply local law that most closely approximates an absolute waiver of all civil liability in connection with the Program, unless a warranty or assumption of liability accompanies a copy of the Program in return for a fee.

## **1.2. The philosophy**

I sadly observed that some folks mistook my security articles —most of them written more than a year before Admin Tools was even as much as a jot in my notebook— as being hypocritical and a thinly disguised attempt to market Admin Tools. Say what?! Unlike most people out there *I always mean what I write and write what I mean*. If I wanted to market Admin Tools aggressively, I would have never written any thorough security article, let alone give away PHP and .htaccess code to deal with the security issues discussed. I would have followed the steps of the antivirus guys, spreading fear, uncertainty and doubt among users, then taking advantage of their vulnerable position to rip them off for good. I have proven time over time that I am not that kind of person, therefore I feel compelled to answer their libellous and unjust attacks with my long-standing philosophy over software and information.

The ultimate good in a functional society is Freedom. Users are entitled to Freedom of choice, that's why I create Free and Open Source Software. Users are entitled to Free access to knowledge, that's why I write articles and make them available under a Free or public domain license.

These are the two basic ingredients of my philosophy as a professional developer and long-time member of the FOSS movement. Admin Tools is not supposed to be the One True Way to achieve this kind of security enhancements in Joomla!. As a matter of fact, all of its functionality has been documented in various articles and blog posts I have written in the Joomla! Community Magazine and on my own site. All my articles predate integration of said features inside

Admin Tools. Admin Tools is simply a software product which strives in automating those tedious tasks, allowing non-technical users to enjoy the same level of security as the more technically inclined amongst us —the opposite of what one page Wiki posts full of vague advice does. I am giving users Freedom of Choice, not taking it away from them. If you do not wish to buy the Professional release, everything you need to know is detailed out there in the open Internet by yours truly. There are competitive solutions which offer different subsets of Admin Tools functionality too; they're also far more expensive than the 0\$ Admin Tools Core release. On top of that, I strive to enrich Admin Tools with features suggested by you, the community of Joomla! users and developers; that's where most of the new features in release 1.1 spring from. If you do not wish to use Admin Tools at all, even the free forever Core release, that's fine by me too; the instructions to achieve the same level of protection is always out there.

Now you all know and —hopefully— can tell what is marketing and what is a sincere commitment to helping the worldwide community of Joomla! users.

Peace.

## 2. Server environment requirements

In order to work, Admin Tools requires the following server software environment:

- Joomla!™ 1.5.0 or later in the 1.5.x range. It is a native component; it doesn't require Legacy Mode but can work with it if it's enabled.
- PHP 5.2.9 or greater. It will not work on PHP 4!
- MySQL 4.1 or later. MySQL 5.0 or greater recommended for optimal performance.
- Minimum 16Mb of PHP `memory_limit`. More is better.
- The PHP function `opendir` must be available.
- The cURL PHP module or `fopen()` URL wrappers must be installed for the Joomla! update to work.

As far as the browser is concerned, you can use:

- Internet Explorer 7, or greater
- Firefox 3.5, or greater
- Safari 4, or greater
- Opera 10, or greater
- Google Chrome 5 or greater

In any case, you must make sure that Javascript is enabled on your browser for the administration of the component to work at all.

## 3. Installing Admin Tools

### 3.1. Normal installation

Installing Admin Tools is no different than installing any other Joomla!™ extension on your site. You can read the complete instructions for installing Joomla!™ extensions on the official help page [<http://help.joomla.org/content/view/1476/235/>]. Throughout this chapter we assume that you are familiar with these instructions and we will not duplicate them.

You can download the latest installation packages by visiting our site at <http://www.akeebabackup.com>. Use the Download link on the top toolbar to open the page of the official releases and locate the Admin Tools package. Clicking on "View Releases" will get you to a list of all releases up-to-date. Click on the "View files" of the latest release to view a file list. Find the item you want to download and click on "Download file". In any case, do not extract the ZIP files yet!

Log in to your site's administrator section. Click on the Extensions, Install/Uninstall (Joomla! 1.5) link on the top menu. In this page, locate the Browse button in the Upload Package File area. Locate the installation ZIP file you had previously downloaded and select it. Back to the page, click on the Upload File & Install button. After a short while, Joomla!™ will tell you that the component, the module and the plugin have been installed.

If you can't install Admin Tools and you are receiving messages regarding unwritable directories, inability to move files or other similar file system related error messages, please do not ask us for support. These errors stem from your site set up and can best be resolved by asking for help in the official Joomla!™ forums [<http://forum.joomla.org>]. If, however, you receive a blank page, an Internal Server Error page or a timeout error message, please proceed to the manual installation section of this documentation.

Please make sure that the `plg_admintools` (System - Admin Tools) plugin is installed and published. Without it, the Web Application Firewall feature and several other aspects of the component will not work. Normally, this plugin should be installed and activated while installing Admin Tools Professional. As a matter of fact, the installation status of Admin Tools' plugin and module is displayed after the installation of the bundle. If the plugin is not installed, you will also be warned as soon as you attempt to configure any feature of the component relying on the plugin.

## 3.2. Manual installation

Sometimes Joomla!™ is unable to properly extract ZIP archives due to technical limitations on your server. In this case, you can follow a manual installation procedure.

First, you have to extract the installation ZIP file in a subdirectory named `admintools` on your local PC. Then, upload the entire subdirectory inside your site's temporary directory. At this point, there should be a subdirectory named `admintools` inside your site's temporary directory which contains all of the ZIP package's files.

If you are unsure where your site's temporary directory is located, you can look it up by going to the Global Configuration, click on the Server tab and take a look at the Path to Temp-folder setting. The default setting is the `tmp` directory under your site's root. Rarely, especially on automated installations using Fantastico, this might have been assigned the system-wide `/tmp` directory. In this case, please consult your host for instructions on how to upload files inside this directory, or about changing your Joomla!™ temporary directory back to the default location and making it writable.

Assuming that you are past this uploading step, click on the Extensions, Install/Uninstall (Joomla! 1.5) or Extensions, Manage (Joomla! 1.6 users) link on the top menu. In this page, locate the Install Directory edit box in the Install from Directory area. It is already filled in with the absolute path to your temporary directory, for example `/var/www/joomla/tmp`. Please append `/admintools` to it. As per our example, it should look something like `/var/www/joomla/tmp/admintools`. Then, click on the Install button.

If you still can't install Admin Tools and you are receiving messages regarding unwritable directories, inability to move files or other similar file system related error messages, please do not ask us for support. These errors stem from your site set up and can best be resolved by asking for help in the official Joomla!™ forums [<http://forum.joomla.org>].

Please make sure that the `plg_admintools` (System - Admin Tools) plugin is installed and published. Without it, the Web Application Firewall feature and several other aspects of the component will not work. Normally, this plugin should be installed and activated while installing Admin Tools Professional. As a matter of fact, the installation status of Admin Tools' plugin and module is displayed after the installation of the bundle. If the plugin is not installed, you will also be warned as soon as you attempt to configure any feature of the component relying on the plugin.



# Chapter 2. Using Admin Tools

## 1. The Control Panel

The main page of the component which gives you access to all of its functions is called the Control Panel.

The screenshot shows the Admin Tools Professional Control Panel. At the top, it says "Admin Tools Professional svn189" and has a "Parameters" link. The main area is divided into three sections: Updates, Security, and Tools. The Updates section shows a green checkmark icon for "Joomla! Core Up to date" and a yellow exclamation mark icon for "UPDATE FOUND! CLICK TO UPDATE.". The Security section contains icons for Emergency Off-Line, Master Password, Access Control, Password-protect Administrator, .htaccess Maker, Web Application Firewall, Database table prefix editor, and Super Administrator ID. The Tools section contains icons for Permissions Configuration, Fix Permissions, SEO and Link Tools, Clean Temp-Directory, Change Database Collation, Repair & Optimise Tables, Purge Sessions, URL Redirection, and Scheduling (via plugin). On the right side, there are three boxes: "Joomla! Core Updates" showing version 1.5.22 as "Up to date", "Credits" for Nicholas K. Dionysopoulos, and a "DISCLAIMER" about security-related components.

**Admin Tools Professional svn189** Parameters

**Updates**

Joomla! Core Up to date UPDATE FOUND! CLICK TO UPDATE.

**Security**

Emergency Off-Line Master Password Access Control Password-protect Administrator .htaccess Maker Web Application Firewall Database table prefix editor Super Administrator ID

**Tools**

Permissions Configuration Fix Permissions SEO and Link Tools Clean Temp-Directory Change Database Collation Repair & Optimise Tables Purge Sessions URL Redirection Scheduling (via plugin)

**Joomla! Core Updates**

Your version	1.5.22
Latest version	1.5.22
Status	Up to date

**Credits**

Copyright © 2010 - 2011 Nicholas K. Dionysopoulos / AkeebaBackup.com  
If you use Admin Tools, please post a rating and a review at the Joomla! Extensions Directory.

**DISCLAIMER**  
Security-related components, like this, are not designed to offer 100% protection of your site against any attack imaginable and –even though they do increase the security of your site– in no case they shall replace a functional human brain and security fine-tuning customised for your site. At the very least, make regular backups and keep an eye for abnormal site behaviour on top of using this software.

The Control Panel is split to two areas, the left-hand control panel icons and the right-hand information boxes.

In the left hand area you have icons which launch the individual tools out of which Admin Tools is made when clicked. Each of those tools is described in a section of its own in the rest of this documentation.

Clicking on the Scheduling (via plugin) button will launch the System - Admin Tools plugin configuration page in a pop-up dialog box. In there, you can configure the scheduling options for Admin Tools' utilities. Do note that this feature is only available in the Professional edition.

The Joomla! Core update status icon will toggle between a green check mark, an exclamation/warning icon and a recycle icon. When it is a green check mark it means that your site already has the latest version of the Joomla! core installed and no further action is required. An exclamation icon means that there is a newer version of the Joomla! core available than the one installed and you should upgrade immediately by clicking on it. When it turns into a recycle icon, it means that Admin Tools was not able to fetch the latest Joomla! release information from the JoomlaCode.org servers. In this case you have to manually update your Joomla! site. Most often you can ask your host to open their firewall so that your site can access the JoomlaCode.org servers of standard HTTP (port 80) to restore the functionality of this feature.

The topmost right hand information pane displays the Joomla! core update status. "Your version" is the Joomla! version installed on your site. "Latest version" is the latest version of the Joomla! core available for download. "Status", as the name implies, denotes the update status of your Joomla! installation. When it's up to date you don't have to do anything else. If it notes that an update was found, click on the Joomla! Core update status icon to immediately upgrade to the new release.

Below that there is the Credits pane, with information about this software. If you found this software useful, please consider donating a small amount to keep its development active by clicking on the "PayPal donate" button (visible on the Admin Tools Core release). Your donations are securely handled by PayPal. We would also appreciate you posting a review at the Joomla! Extensions Directory listing of Admin Tools following the relevant link in this pane.

## 2. Updating Joomla!

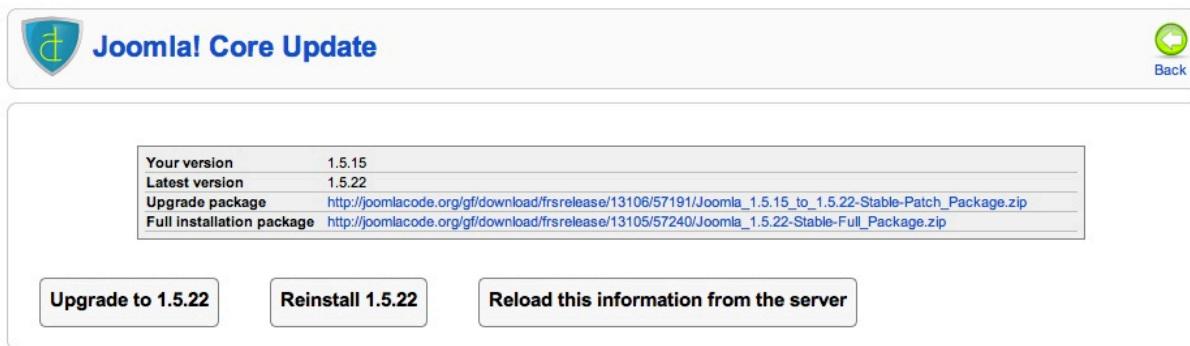
Arguably, one of the most basic site maintenance operations which has a strong impact on security is keeping your Joomla! installation up to date. This used to be a tedious job: you had to note which Joomla! version you're using then go to <http://joomla.org/download.html> to find out the latest version and compare them. If there was an update, you had to scour the lengthy download page for the update package, extract it locally, upload all the files through FTP and check that everything was working properly. Multiplied by dozens of sites managed by a single site builder this can soon amount into a maintenance nightmare. Not any more.

Admin Tools' Joomla! Core update feature allows for automation of this tedious procedure. Not only does it detect the latest version and does the version comparison for you, but it also allows you to backup (optional, available only if Akeeba Backup 3.1 or later is installed) and then upgrade your core installation with a single click. If you believe that your core files have been compromised, you can always overwrite them with a fresh copy again with our easy-to-use one-click process.

### Important

Admin Tools has to be able to contact [joomlancode.org](http://joomlancode.org) for this feature to work. If it throws an error telling you that you have to upgrade Joomla! manually, please contact your host and ask them to open port 80 connections to [joomlancode.org](http://joomlancode.org) on their firewall. Also ensure that your server either has the PHP curl module installed and enabled (preferred) or allows using the `fopen()` URL wrappers. If you are unsure, ask your host.

When you launch the Joomla! Core Update tool of Admin Tools you are presented with a page like this:



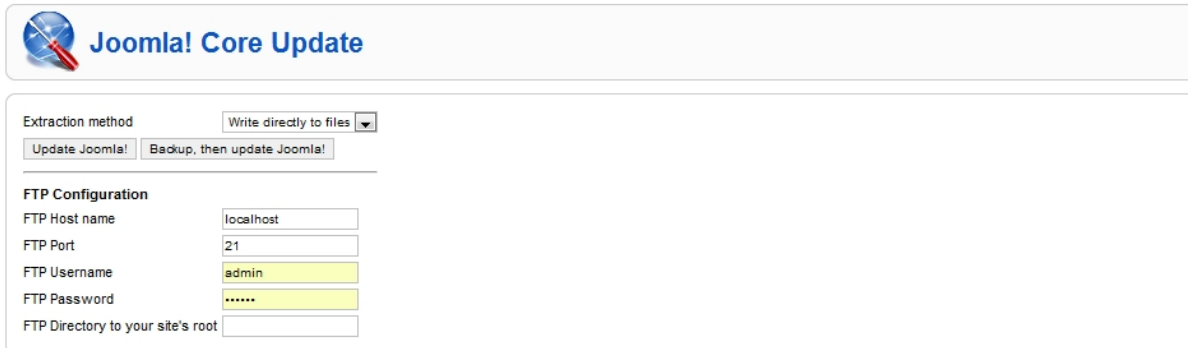
Your version	1.5.15
Latest version	1.5.22
Upgrade package	<a href="http://joomlancode.org/gf/download/frsrelease/13106/57191/Joomla_1.5.15_to_1.5.22-Stable-Patch_Package.zip">http://joomlancode.org/gf/download/frsrelease/13106/57191/Joomla_1.5.15_to_1.5.22-Stable-Patch_Package.zip</a>
Full installation package	<a href="http://joomlancode.org/gf/download/frsrelease/13105/57240/Joomla_1.5.22-Stable-Full_Package.zip">http://joomlancode.org/gf/download/frsrelease/13105/57240/Joomla_1.5.22-Stable-Full_Package.zip</a>

In this example, Admin Tools detected that the site is running on Joomla! 1.5.15 and the latest release is 1.5.20. It gives us two options:

- Upgrade to 1.5.22. This will download and install the "Stable Patch" package which contains only the files changed between the installed and latest release. This is the recommended approach to upgrade an existing site.
- Reinstall 1.5.22. This will download and install the full installation package of the latest release, overwriting all Joomla! core files. This is not recommended, unless you have a strong indication that something bad happened to your Joomla! core files, e.g. files missing or have a suspicion of a hacked site. In the latter case, reinstalling the core files is not enough; you'll also need a security audit of your site.

Obviously, if there is no update available -i.e. you already have the latest version- only the Reinstall button will be visible.

Clicking on either of those buttons will start downloading the respective installation package. Once the download is complete, you are presented with the pre-installation page:



The Extraction method option defines how Admin Tools is going to attempt to overwrite your backup archive's files. The Write directly to files will attempt to have PHP directly overwrite the files. This will not work on most shared hosts. We, therefore, recommend using the second option, Upload using FTP, which will use FTP to overwrite the files. In this case, you have to fill in the following information on the lower part of the page:

- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| FTP Host name     | The host name of your site's FTP server, without the protocol. For example, <code>ftp.example.com</code> is valid, <code>ftp://ftp.example.com</code> is <i>invalid</i> .   |
| FTP Port          | The TCP/IP port of your site's FTP server. The default and standard value is 21. Please only use a different setting if your host explicitly specifies a non-standard port.   |
| FTP User name     | The username used to connect to the FTP server.   |
| FTP Password      | The password used to connect to the FTP server.   |
| Initial directory | The FTP directory to your web site's root. This <i>is not the same as the filesystem directory</i> and can't be determined automatically. The easiest way to determine it is to connect to your site using your favourite FTP client, such as FileZilla. Navigate inside your web site's root directory. You'll know you are there when you see the file <code>configuration.php</code> and directories such as <code>administrator</code> , <code>component</code> , <code>language</code> , <code>includes</code> , <code>cache</code> and <code>xmlrpc</code> in that directory. Copy (in FileZilla it appears on the right hand column, above the directory tree) and paste that path in Akeeba Backup's setting. |

Once you are ready to upgrade your site, you have two options to do that:

- Update Joomla! will start performing the update right away.
- Backup, then update Joomla! is only available if you have Akeeba Backup Core or Akeeba Backup Professional, version 3.1 stable or later, installed on your site. By clicking on this button you will be transferred to Akeeba Backup's Backup Now page. You can select the backup profile and start the backup once there. As soon as the backup is finished, Akeeba Backup will automatically send you back to Admin Tools which start the restoration procedure. We wanted to make sure that backing up and then upgrading your site requires only two clicks and no second thought.

When the restoration begins, you are presented with the update progress:



### Joomla! Core Update

#### Joomla! Upgrade In Progress...

Bytes read	271784
Bytes extracted	789084
Files extracted	244

You can see how much of the installation package has been processed (Bytes read), how much data has been written to disk (Bytes extracted) and, finally, how many files have been extracted so far (Files extracted).

When the update is over you are redirected to the Admin Tools Control Panel. Admin Tools' Joomla! update icon turns to a green check mark reading "Up to date". That's it! Your Joomla! core is now updated.

## What happens if I get a message about a truncated or corrupt archive?

If you get this error while updating the Joomla! core, your server does not permit downloading the upgrade package correctly. In this case, use the link to the Joomla! upgrade package in the "Joomla! Core Update" page to download the archive. Then, upload it to your site's temporary directory (as defined in your site's Global Configuration). By doing so, Admin Tools will detect that you have manually downloaded the update package and will not attempt to re-download it when you click on the Upgrade button.

In case that accessing your site is not possible after an interruption in the update process, do not panic. Go to <http://joomla.org/download.html> and download the latest upgrade package. Extract it locally, then upload all extracted files to your site, overwriting the existing ones. This is the manual upgrade process and is bound to work.

## What do I need to setup on my server to allow Admin Tools to download the update information and upgrade packages?

You need to have either the cURL PHP module installed and activated or URL fopen() wrappers. Ask your host whether they provide either of these options. Furthermore, your host must allow TCP/IP connections over ports 80 and 443 to [joomla.org](http://joomla.org) and [akeebabackup.com](http://akeebabackup.com). If unsure, ask your host about it. Most hosts have a firewall in place and they will have to place exceptions at your request for Admin Tools' update features to properly work.

### Important

On Windows hosts we strongly recommend installing and activating the cURL module.

Finally, while Admin Tools will try creating a writable subdirectory within your site's Temp-directory, this isn't always possible. We highly recommend having a writable temporary directory. If your host is running suPHP all you need is to give your site's Temp-directory 0755 or, on some few hosts, 0775 permissions. If your host is not running suPHP, you can follow one of the following alternatives.

The first alternative (easier, not recommended) is to give your temporary directory 0777 permissions. However, as this might adversely effect your site's security, we highly recommend uploading a .htaccess file by FTP inside this directory with the following contents:

```
order deny, allow
deny from all
```

```
allow from none
```

Give 0644 permissions to that file once uploading it. This way the temporary directory is made world-writable but inaccessible from the web, so that potential hackers can not exploit its lax permissions to attack your site.

The second alternative is more secure, but more messy as well. Start by visiting your site's Global Configuration and making sure that the path to the Temp-directory points to your site's tmp folder. Do note that you need to know the absolute path to that directory. If unsure, you can easily determine it. Place a file named `temppath.php` on your site's root with the following line as its only contents:

```
<?php echo dirname(__FILE__).DIRECTORY_SEPARATOR.'tmp'; ?>
```

You can access it from the web, e.g. `http://www.example.com/temppath.php`, and it will print out the absolute path to your site's Temp-directory. Remember to remove that file afterwards!

After you have gotten past that step, use your FTP client to completely remove the `tmp` directory from your site. Then, install Joomla! eXtplorer [<http://extensions.joomla.org/extensions/core-enhancements/file-management/2630>] and create a new `tmp` directory in your site's root. If this doesn't work, you may want to ask your host about how you can temporarily make your site's web root world-writable in order to create that directory. Your host may complain about security reasons. Please direct them to this paragraph. We only need to make the web root writable for a limited amount of time, only long enough to create the new Temp-directory, and then reset its permissions to more safe settings.

Provided that you have created that directory, it is now owned by your web server user it is writable. Finally, for security reasons, you might also want to create a new `.htaccess` file inside that directory using eXtplorer, with the following contents:

```
order deny, allow
deny from all
allow from none
```

## 3. Fixing the permissions of files and directories

As any web site administrator knows, file and directories permissions are the first gatekeeper on the way to having a site hacked. Having 0777 permissions lying around is a big mistake and could prove fatal to your site. For more information, read my blog post [<http://www.dionysopoulos.me/blog/777-the-number-of-the-beast>]. Ideally, you should only have 0755 permissions for your directories and 0644 for your files.

On other occasions, we have all run across a misconfigured server which gives newly created files and directories impractical permissions, like 0600. This has the immediate effect that newly uploaded or created files are not accessible from the web. Fixing those permissions is a tedious process, hunting down the files with FTP and changing their permissions manually. Ever so often this becomes so tedious that we are tempted to just give 0777 permissions to everything and get done with it. Big, fatal mistake.

The solution to those permissions problems is the Fix permissions tool of Admin Tools. Its mission is as simple as it gets: it will give all your directories 0755 permissions and all of your files 0644 permissions. Obviously, this only has effect on Linux, Mac OS X, Solaris and other hosts based of UNIX-derivative Operating Systems, i.e. everything except servers running on Windows. If you are on a shared host you will most likely want to enable Joomla!'s FTP layer in your site's Global Configuration. Admin Tools will detect that and when it runs across a file or directory whose permissions can't be changed by PHP will use FTP to perform this task.

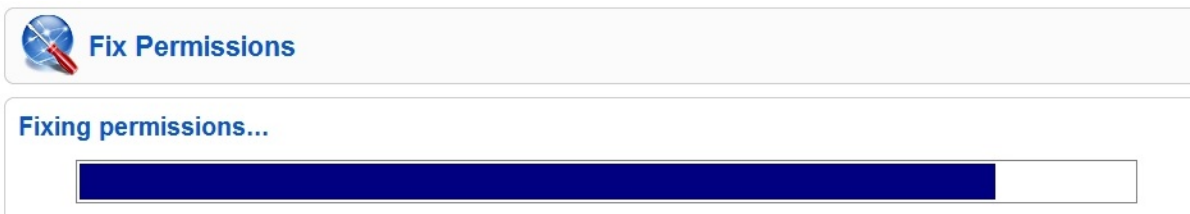
### Note

You can customize the permissions per folder and file using the Permissions Configuration page.

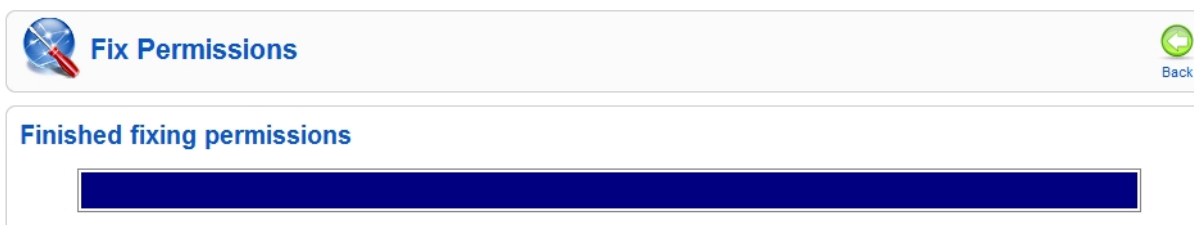
## Warning

It is possible that —if you select the wrong kind of permissions in the Permissions Configuration page— you will be locked out of your site and will not be able to access it over FTP or your hosting panel's file manager. If this happens, please contact your host and ask them to fix the permissions of your site.

When you click on the Fix Permissions tool you are going to see the "Fixing Permissions..." pop-up window with a progress bar filling up as Admin Tools is changing the permissions of all your directories and files.



When it's over the progress bar will fill up and the title of the page changes to "Finished fixing permissions":



Just click on the Back button to return to the Control Panel page.

## No permissions have been changed on my site. Why?

It's a matter of ownership. If you are on a host which doesn't use suPHP, your files and directories are owned by a different user than the one the web server is running under. All you have to do is go to the Global Configuration page of your site, enter your FTP details and enable Joomla!'s FTP option. Admin Tools will pick it up next time you try to fix permissions and automatically use the FTP mode whenever it can't change permissions directly.

## I can see a lot of JFTP error messages in red background during that process. What's wrong?

Admin Tools, as explained in the above paragraph, tries to use the FTP mode whenever it can't change the permissions directly. In order for this trick to work, your FTP server must support the CHMOD command. Not all servers do, though, especially those running on Windows where there is no notion of permissions. If you get this long list of JFTP Bad Response messages, please ask your host whether their FTP server supports the CHMOD command.

Finally, some hosts place directories inside your web root which are not meant to be directly accessible to you, i.e. a `cgi-bin` or a `stats` directory. You can't change the permissions of those directories due to their ownership (they are usually owned by a reserved system user or the root user) and will cause a few JFTP error messages to be spat out. This is normal and you shouldn't worry about that.

## 3.1. Configuring the permissions of files and directories

By default, Admin Tools will apply 0755 permissions to all of your directories and 0644 permissions to all of your files. However, this isn't always desirable. Sometimes you want to make configuration files read-only (0400 or similar permissions) or give a directory wide-open (0777) permissions. While this is not recommended, it may be the only option on some shared hosts for several extensions to work. Most notably, some extensions need to be able to append to

files —e.g. Akeeba Backup needs to append to its log and backup archives— which is impossible to do over FTP and, therefore, requires wider permissions. Since Admin Tools 1.0.b1 you can do that using the Permissions Configuration button in the component's control panel.

**Admin Tools – Permissions Configuration**

[Back](#)

**Default permissions**

Directories: 755

Files: 644

Save default permissions

Path: < Root >

Save custom permissions

Folders			
Folder	Owner	Permissions	
.settings	nicholas:nicholas	755	--
administrator	nicholas:nicholas	755	--
backups	nicholas:nicholas	777	777
cache	nicholas:nicholas	755	--
components	nicholas:nicholas	755	--
files	nicholas:nicholas	755	--

Files			
File	Owner	Permissions	
buildpath	nicholas:nicholas	744	--
htaccess	nicholas:nicholas	644	--
.project	nicholas:nicholas	744	--
CHANGELOG.php	nicholas:nicholas	644	--
COPYRIGHT.php	nicholas:nicholas	644	--
CREDITS.php	nicholas:nicholas	644	--

When you launch this feature you see a page split in three sections.

The top section, titled Default permissions, allows you to configure the permissions which will be applied if nothing different is configured. Use the drop-down lists to select the default permissions for directories and files (the default setting is 755 and 644 respectively), then use the Save default permissions button to apply the setting.

The middle section shows the path to the currently selected directory and allows you to quickly navigate through the folders by clicking on their names.

The bottom section is split in two panes, Folders and Files. Each pane lists the folders and files inside the current directory. Clicking on the name of a folder will navigate inside that folder. There are three columns next to each folder. The first displays the current owner (user:group format). The second displays the current permissions of that directory in the file system. The final column contains is a drop down list. The default setting, represented by dashes, means that there is no specific preference for this folder/file and the default permissions will be applied to it. If you select a customized permissions setting remember to click the Save custom permissions button before navigating to another folder or returning to the control page, otherwise your settings will be lost.

## Important

None of these customized permission settings are applied immediately. You will need to launch the Fix Permissions feature for them to be applied. Click on the Back button to return to the Control Panel page where you can find this button.

Alternatively, you can click on the Fix and Apply Permissions button to immediately save and apply all custom permissions you see on this page. If you don't see the permission changing, please take a look at the previous section of this user's guide for more information on what you have to do.

## 4. Emergency Off-Line Mode

Joomla!'s off-line feature, the one you can enable in your site's Global Configuration, has a major deficiency. It doesn't put the site off-line. All it does is to replace the output of the component with the "off-line" page. This has grave



security implications, especially when you need to take your site off-line to deal with a security breach (e.g. a hacked site) or to update a key component of your site. For more information about this problem, please read this article [<http://www.dionysopoulos.me/blog/how-offline-is-joomla-offline-mode>].

The Emergency Off-Line Mode of Admin Tools enables you to *really* and *securely* take your site off-line. More specifically, the Emergency Off-Line Mode does the following actions:

- It creates —if it doesn't already exist— a static HTML page named `offline.html` in your site's root. This page contains the offline message to show to visitors.
- It creates a backup copy of your site's `.htaccess` file, if there was one, under the name `.htaccess.eom`.
- Finally, it creates a `.htaccess` file which will temporarily redirect all access attempts to the `offline.html` page. It will allow only your IP address to have access to the site.

In order to put your site in Emergency Off-Line Mode, simply click on the Emergency Off-Line button in Admin Tools' Control Panel page. This will get you to the following page:

 **Emergency Off-Line** 

Set Offline

Clicking the button above will set your site in the Emergency Off-Line mode. In this mode nobody will be able to access your site except visitors coming from your current IP address. Should your Internet connection drop or your IP change for any reason, the only way to access your site will be removing the `.htaccess` file from your site's root using FTP. Please read this very carefully and print this page for reference.

In case this automated tools fails to create the `.htaccess` file on your site's root, please remove your current `.htaccess` (if any) and create a new `.htaccess` file with the following contents:

```
RewriteEngine On
RewriteBase /
RewriteCond %{REMOTE_HOST} !192\.\.168\.\.1\.\.8
RewriteCond %{REQUEST_URI} !offline\.\.html
RewriteCond %{REQUEST_URI} !(\.png|\.jpg|\.gif|\.jpeg|\.bmp|\.swf|\.css|\.js)$
RewriteRule (.*) offline.html [R=307,L]
```

Clicking the Set Offline button will attempt to perform the steps outlined above. Should any of those steps fail, for example due to insufficient file permissions, you can still put your site in Emergency Off-Line Mode by taking out the following procedure:

1. Keep a copy of your site's `.htaccess` file, e.g. renaming it to `htaccess.bak`.
2. Create a new `.htaccess` file in your site's root with its contents being what displayed in the last part of the Emergency Off-Line Mode page.

If your Internet IP address changes before you disable the Emergency Off-Line Mode —i.e. your connection drops or you switch to another computer which connects to the Internet through a different Internet router— you will be unable to log in to your site. In this case, follow these steps:

1. Using an FTP application of your liking remove the `.htaccess` file, or upload a blank `.htaccess` file overwriting the old one.
2. Go to your site's administrator back-end and relaunch Admin Tools' Emergency Off-Line mode. Clicking on the Set Offline button will create a new `.htaccess` file with your current IP address. Your backup `.htaccess.eom` file will not be overwritten.

If you want to set your site back on-line, just visit the Emergency Off-Line page and click on the Set Online button. This will replace the off-line `.htaccess` file with the contents of the `.htaccess.eom` backup file and remove the backup file. If this doesn't work, follow this manual procedure:

1. Using an FTP application of your liking remove the `.htaccess` file, or upload a blank `.htaccess` file overwriting the old one.



2. Rename the `.htaccess.eom` backup file back to `.htaccess`

## **Will I be able to use FTP or my host's control panel file management when I enable this feature?**

Of course! This feature only protects web (HTTP/HTTPS) access. It can't and won't touch FTP access or your hosting control panel's file management.

## **Should I always use the emergency off-line mode instead of Joomla!'s off-line feature?**

The short answer is, simply, no. There are many cases where using Joomla!'s off-line feature is more convenient, i.e. when you want to simply make your site's content unavailable to random web visitors and search engines while building a new site. The only cases when you should use the Emergency Off-Line Mode are:

- If you believe that your site has been compromised (hacked). The Emergency Off-Line will make it impossible for the hacker to access your site while you are working to restore it.
- When updating key components of your site and don't want to risk a user following a direct link to screw up the process.

In all other cases it's more convenient and sufficient to go to your site's Global Configuration and enable the off-line feature of Joomla! itself.

## **The offline.html page Admin Tools creates is horrid. Can I change it?**

Thank you for noticing that! Of course you can change it. Simply upload an `offline.html` of your liking to your site's root. You can link to JPG, GIF, PNG, BMP, SWF, CSS and JS files —on the same or a different server— from inside the HTML of this file. Do not try to link to other file types, it will not work.

## **Won't the redirection to offline.html screw up my SEO ranking?**

No. The redirection to `offline.html` is made using the 307 HTTP status code which tells search engines that this redirection is temporary, they should not index the page now, but come back later when the problem will have been restored.

## **Help! I have been locked out of my site! Fix it!**

Read a few paragraphs above. You just have to remove a file using FTP.

## **The redirection doesn't work! I test it from my PC and I can still see my site.**

First, I have to ask the obvious question: did you *really* read the description of this feature? You are supposed to be able to see your site only from your PC. If you want to test that this feature really works please try accessing your site

from another computer, connected to the Internet from a different router. One good idea is to use your cellphone, as long as it connects to the Internet over 3G, not over WiFi. If you did that and still don't see the redirection happening, make sure that your server supports `.htaccess` files and that it has `mod_rewrite` enabled. Some servers, like IIS, do not support `.htaccess` files at all. If this is the case, consult your host about taking your site completely off-line.

## Help! As soon as I clicked on "Put Offline" I got a white page or Internal Server Error 500 page.

Don't panic! You have an old version of Apache —1.3 or 2.0— which doesn't support one feature used in the `.htaccess` file generated by Admin Tools. You can easily work around this issue by editing the `.htaccess` file in your site's root, using an FTP application. Replace `[R=307,L]` in the last line with `[R,L]` (that is, remove the `=307` part) and save back the file. That's all.

## My Internet connection drops all of the time. Will I get continuously locked out of my site if I use this feature?

It depends. If you have a static IP address, no, you will never get locked out. If you have a dynamic IP address, I don't know. When I used to have a dynamic IP address I observed that my IP address wouldn't change if my connection dropped for less than 1-2 minutes. It all depends on how your ISP assigns IP addresses to its clients. The only way to find out is the hard way: trial and error.

## 5. Protect your administrator back-end with a password



The Password-protect Administrator tool of Admin Tools is designed to add an extra level of protection to your site's administrator back-end, asking for a username and password before accessing the administrator login page or any other file inside the `administrator` directory of your site. It does so by using Apache `.htaccess` and `.htpasswd` files, so it won't work on IIS hosts.

### Important

Some prepackaged server bundles, such as Zend Server CE, and some live hosts do not allow using `.htaccess` files to password-protect a directory. If it is a local server, edit your `httpd.conf` file (for Zend Server CE this is located in `C:\Program Files\Zend\Apache2\conf` or `C:\Program Files (x86)\Zend\Apache2\conf`) and modify all `AllowOverride` lines to read:

```
AllowOverride All
```

If you are on a live host, please consult your host about the possibility of them allowing you to use this feature on your site.


**Password-protect Administrator**


Password encryption not supported on Windows™  
 Due to the lack of the standard "crypt" encryption scheme on the Windows platform, your password will be stored in the administrator/.htpasswd file as clear text (unencrypted). As a precaution, do not use a password you have used or will be using for any other purpose.

This feature will password-protect your administrator area using .htaccess files. Your server must support this type of password protection.

If your administrator area becomes inaccessible, please remove the .htaccess and .htpasswd files from the administrator directory using FTP or your host's File Manager

When you apply the password protection, the following username and password will be always requested by your browser before you can log in to your administrator area.

Username   
 Password

If you are on a server running on Windows™, you are receiving a warning at the top of the page stating that the password will be stored to disk unencrypted. This is done due to the lack of the system-wide crypt function on the Windows platform, which causes Apache to understand password only if they are unencrypted or encrypted with a non-standard encryption scheme which does not exist in PHP.

## Warning

If you password your administrator directory on a Linux system and then restore your site on a Windows server (typical live to local site restoration) you will be receiving a blank page or an Internal Server 500 when accessing the site. This is normal and expected. All you have to do is to remove the .htaccess and .htpasswd files from your administrator directory after restoring the site.

In order to apply the password protection, simply enter a desired username and password and click on the Password-protect button. After a few seconds your browser will ask you to supply the username and password you just specified. This will also happen each and every time anybody tries to access the administrator back-end of your site. In other words, you have to share the username and password with all back-end users of your site.

If after applying the password protection you immediately receive a blank page or an Internal Server Error 500 instead of a password prompt, your server is not compatible with the password protection scheme. In this case, the only way to gain access to your site's administrator back-end is to remove the .htaccess and .htpasswd files from your administrator directory using an FTP application or the File Manager in your site's hosting control panel. If in doubt, consult your host about how you can do that before trying to apply the password protection. If those files do not show up in your FTP client, please create two blank files with those names and upload them to your site, overwriting the existing (but invisible) ones. This will remove the password protection so that you can regain entrance to your administrator back-end.

If you wish to remove the password protection you can either remove both the .htaccess and .htpasswd files from your administrator directory, or click on the Remove Password Protection button.

## 6. The .htaccess maker

### Note

This feature is only available in the Professional release

One of the most important aspects of managing a web site hosted on an Apache server is being able to fine-tune your .htaccess file. This file is responsible for many web server level tweaks, such as enabling the use of search engine

friendly (SEF) URLs, blocking access to system files which should not be accessible from the web, redirecting between pages based on custom criteria and even optimising the performance of your site. On the downside, learning how to tweak all those settings is akin to learning a foreign language. The .htaccess Maker tool of Admin Tools is designed to help you create such a file by utilizing a point-and-click interface.

## Important

Some prepackaged server bundles, such as Zend Server CE, and some live hosts do not allow using .htaccess files to override server settings. If it is a local server, edit your `httpd.conf` file (for Zend Server CE this is located in `C:\Program Files\Zend\Apache2\conf` or `C:\Program Files (x86)\Zend\Apache2\conf`) and modify all `AllowOverride` lines to read:

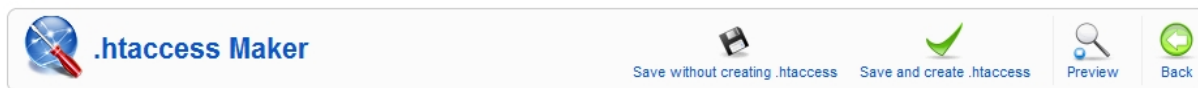
```
AllowOverride All
```

If you are on a live host, please consult your host about the possibility of them allowing you to use this feature on your site.

## Tip

If you ever want to revert to a "safe default", just set all of the options on this page to "Off" and click on "Save and create .htaccess". This will create a .htaccess file which is essentially the same as the one shipped with Joomla! (`htaccess.txt`).

The top part of the .htaccess maker page contains the standard toolbar buttons you'd expect:



- Save without creating .htaccess saves the changes you have made in this page's options without actually creating the customized .htaccess file. This should be used when you have not decided on some options yet, or if you want to preview the generated .htaccess file before writing it to disk.
- Save and create .htaccess is the logical next step to the previous button. It not only saves the changes you made, but also creates and writes the new .htaccess file to the disk. If you already had a .htaccess file on your site, it will be renamed to .htaccess.admintools before the new file is written to disk.
- Preview pops up a dialog where you can see how the generated .htaccess file will look like without writing it to disk. This dialog shows the saved configuration. If you have modified any settings they will not be reflected in there until you click either of the previous two buttons.
- The Back button takes you back to the Control Panel page.

Below the toolbar there are five panes with different options, described below. Before you do that, please read and understand the following warning. Support requests which indicate that you have not read it will be replied with a link back to this page.

## Warning

Depending on your web server settings, some of these options may be incompatible with your site. In this case you will get a blank page or an Internal Server Error 500 error page when trying to access any part of your site. If this happens, you have to remove the .htaccess file from your site's root directory using an FTP application or the File Manager feature of your hosting control panel. Since Admin Tools 1.2, your old .htaccess file is saved as .htaccess.admintools. You can rename that file back to .htaccess to revert to the last known good state. If you are unsure how this works, please consult your host before trying to create a new .htaccess file using this tool.

Some prepackaged server environments, like WAMPserver, do not enable Apache's `mod_rewrite` module by default, which will always result in an Internal Server Error upon applying the `.htaccess` file. In this case you are strongly suggested to enable it. On WAMPserver you can click on its tray icon, go to Apache, Modules and make sure `rewrite_module` is checked. On other server environments you have to edit your `httpd.conf` file and make sure that the `LoadModule mod_rewrite` line is not commented out (there is no hash sign in front of it). Once you do either of these changes, you must restart your server for the change to become effective.

We strongly suggest that you begin by setting all options to No and then enable them one by one, creating a new `.htaccess` file after you have enabled each one of them. If you bump into a blank or error page you will know that the last option you tried is incompatible with your host. In that case, remove the `.htaccess` file, set the option to No and continue with the next one. Unfortunately, there is no other way than trial and error to deduct which options may be incompatible with your server.

## 6.1. Basic Security

Basic security	
Disable directory listings (recommended)	Yes
Protect against common file injection attacks	Yes
Disable PHP Easter Eggs	Yes
Block access to configuration.php-dist and htaccess.txt	Yes
Block access from specific user agents	Yes
User agents to block, one per line	Indy Library libwww-perl Download Demon GetRight GetWeb! Go!Zilla Go-Ahead-Got-It GrabNet TurnitinBot

Disable directory listings (recommended)	When disabled, your web server might list the files and subdirectories of any directory on your site if there is no <code>index.html</code> file inside it. This can pose a security risk, so you should always enable this option to avoid this from happening.
Protect against common file injection attacks	Many attackers try to exploit vulnerable extensions on your site by tricking them into including malicious code hosted on the attacker's server. Enabling this option will protect your server against this kind of attacks.
Disable PHP Easter Eggs	PHP has a fun and annoying feature known as "Easter Eggs". By passing a special URL parameter, PHP will display a picture instead of the actual page requested. Whereas this is considered fun, it is also widely exploited by attackers to figure out the version of your PHP installation (these images change between different versions of PHP) and launch hacking attacks targeting your specific PHP version. By enabling this option you completely disable access to those Easter Eggs and make it even more difficult for attackers to figure out the details of your server.
Block access to configuration.php-dist and htaccess.txt	These two files are left behind after any Joomla! installation or upgrade and can be directly accessed from the web. They are used by attackers to tell the Joomla! version you are using, so that they can tailor an attack targeting your specific Joomla! version. Enabling this option will "hide" those files when accessed from the web (a 404 Not Found page is returned), tricking attackers into believing that these files do not exist and making it slightly more difficult for them to deduct information about your site.
Block access from specific user agents	When enabled, it will block any site access attempt if the remote program sends one of the user agent strings in the User agents to block, one per line option. This feature is designed to protect your site against common bandwidth-hogging download bots and otherwise legitimate tools which are more usually used for hacking sites than their benign intended functionality.

User agents to block, one per line

The user agent strings to block from accessing your site. You don't have to enter the whole UA string, just a part of it. The default setting includes several usual suspects. Separate multiple entries by a single newline character (that is a single press of the ENTER key). Do note that some server with mod\_security or mod\_evasive installed will throw an "Access forbidden" message if you try to save the configuration settings when this field contains the word "WGet". If you come across this issue it is not a bug with Admin Tools or Joomla!, it is a server-level protection feature kicking in. Just avoid including the word Wget and you should be out of harm's way.

## 6.2. Server protection

**Server protection**

**Protection Toggles**

Back-end protection	Yes
Front-end protection	Yes
Allow access to the XML-RPC server	Yes
Anti-leech protection for static resources outside images/stories	Yes

**Fine-tuning**

Back-end directories where file type exceptions are allowed

- components
- modules
- templates
- images
- plugins

Back-end file types allowed in selected directories

- jpe
- jpg
- jpeg
- jp2
- jpe2

Front-end directories where file type exceptions are allowed

- components
- modules
- templates
- images
- plugins

Front-end file types allowed in selected directories

- jpe
- jpg
- jpeg
- jp2
- jpe2

**Exceptions**

Allow direct access to these files

- components/com\_uddeim/captcha15.php
- components/com\_virtuemart/fetchscript.php
- administrator/components/com\_extplorer/fetchscript.php
- plugins/system/GoogleGears/gears-manifest.php
- plugins/content/jw\_allvideos/includes/jw\_allvideos\_scripts.php

Allow direct access, except .php files, to these directories

- components/com\_agora/img/members

Allow direct access, including .php files, to these directories

This is the most coveted feature of our software, offering a near-inclusive protection against the vast majority of known threats when enabled. This feature's mission statement can be summed up with a single phrase: nothing executes on your site unless you allowed it to. By blocking access to front-end and back-end elements (media files, Javascript, CSS and PHP files) it makes it extremely hard—but not outright impossible—for an attacker to hack your site, even if he manages to exploit a security vulnerability to upload malicious PHP code to your site. Additionally, it will deny direct access to resources not designed to be directly accessible from the web, such as translation INI files, which are usually used by attackers to find out which version of Joomla! you are running on your site to tailor an attack to your site. On the downside, you have to explicitly enable access to some extensions' PHP files which are designed to be called directly from the web and not through Joomla!'s main file, `index.php` and `index2.php`.

Do note that enabling this feature will kill the functionality of some extensions which create arbitrarily named PHP files throughout your site, such as RokGZipper. In our humble opinion the security risk of having your site unprotected outweighs the benefits of such solutions by a dramatic factor. As a result, we strongly suggest disabling RokGZipper and other similar software using similarly questionable security practices.

There are three sections of configuration settings controlling the functionality of the Server Protection feature. The first one is the Protection Toggles which allows you to enable or disable the four main aspects of protection:

Back-end protection	Disables direct access to most back-end resources, except those in the exceptions lists. It is generally recommended to turn it on to enhance the protection of your site, unless you have enabled the administrator password protection feature. In the latter case this option is redundant and we recommend turning it off.
Front-end protection	Disables direct access to most front-end resources, except those in the exceptions lists. It is generally recommended to turn it on to enhance the protection of your site.
Allow access to the XML-RPC server	By default, the front-end protection also blocks access to your site's xmlrpc directory, which is used for XML-RPC (Web Services) requests. If you have installed an extension which requires you to turn on the Web Services option in your site's Global Configuration —such as Akeeba Backup's Remote Control plugin, the Blogger service, the Joomla! XML-RPC service or any other similar plugin in the xmlrpc group— you must enable this option for the remote access to work. In all other cases we urge you to keep this option turned off to avoid potential exploits.
Anti-leech protection for static resources outside images/stories	Typically, static resources (images, CSS and Javascript files) are used by potential attackers to deduct the Joomla! version your site is running with the intention to tailor an attack against your site. Enabling this option will make requests to access those files to fail if they are not coming from your own site. This protection does not apply to the user-uploaded media files inside the images/stories directories for a good reason: you want search engines to index those files in order to get more search traffic to your site. We suggest turning on this option. If you need to add directories other than images/stories to the exception list, please add them to the Allow direct access, except .php files, to these directories list in the Exceptions section of this pane.

The next section is called Fine-tuning and contains the necessary options to tweak the protection's behaviour to suit your site. Before describing what each option does, a small explanation of how the protection works is in order. The protection code in the generated `.htaccess` file blocks direct web access to all files. Joomla!'s standard "entry point" or "main" files, `index.php` and `index2.php`, are automatically exempt from this rule. However, your site also contains images, media, CSS and Javascript files inside certain directories. For each of the back-end and front-end protection we need a set of directories where such files are allowed and the file extensions of those files. These are what those options are all about. The default settings contain the most common file types you'd expect to find on a site and the standard Joomla! directories where they should be located. You only have to tweak them if you want to add more file extensions or have such static files in locations other than the default.

Back-end directories where file type exceptions are allowed	This is a list of back-end directories (that is, subdirectories of your site's administrator directory) where you expect media files to be present. Place one directory on each line. Subdirectories of those directories are automatically added to the exceptions list without having to explicitly list them here.
Back-end file types allowed in selected directories	The extensions of back-end files which allowed to pass through the server protection filter, as long as the files with those extensions are in the list above. Place one file extension per line, without the dot. For example, if you want to allow access to all PDF files you have to type in "pdf" (without the quotes) on a new line of this list. Do note that file extensions are case-sensitive. This means that PDF, Pdf, pdf and pDF are four different file extensions as far as your web server is concerned. As a rule of thumb, type in the extensions in lowercase and make sure that the extensions of the files you upload are also in lowercase.
Front-end directories where file type exceptions are allowed	This is a list of front-end directories (that is, directories in your site's root) where you expect media files to be present. Place one directory on each line. Subdirectories of those directories are automatically added to the exceptions list without having to explicitly list them here.
Front-end file types allowed in	The extensions of front-end files which allowed to pass through the server protection filter, as long as the files with those extensions are in the list above. Place one file extension per line, without the

selected directories dot. For example, if you want to allow access to all PDF files you have to type in "pdf" (without the quotes) on a new line of this list. Do note that file extensions are case-sensitive. This means that PDF, Pdf, pdf and pDF are four different file extensions as far as your web server is concerned. As a rule of thumb, type in the extensions in lowercase and make sure that the extensions of the files you upload are also in lowercase.

Finally, we have the Exceptions section. This allows specific files or all files in specific directories to pass through the Server Protection filter without further questions. This is required for several reasons. For starters, some extensions need to directly access PHP files, without passing them through Joomla!'s main files. One such example is Akeeba Backup Professional's `restore.php` used in the integrated restoration feature, as it would be impossible to use the `index.php` of a site which is in a state of flux while the restoration is underway. Other prime examples are CSS and Javascript minifiers, either included in your template or installed on top of your site. Forum attachments are also part of the same problem, as they tend to create a dedicated directory for their attachments, avatar icons and so forth. Moreover, some extensions place PHP files inside your site's `tmp` and `cache` directories and expect them to be directly accessible from the web. While this is a stupid behaviour, contrary to the design goals of Joomla! itself, you still need a way to work around them and we have to provide it. Finally, you may have a third party script (e.g. Coppermine gallery, phpBB forum, WordPress blog, or even another Joomla! site in a subdirectory) which doesn't install as a Joomla! extension. The Server Protection feature would normally block access to it and you still need a way around this limitation. So here we have those workarounds:

Allow direct access to these files	Place one file per line which should be exempt from filtering, therefore accessible directly from the web. The default settings include the required exceptions for some of the most extensions, such as UddeIM, VirtueMart, eXtplorer, Phil Taylor's Google Gears plugin, JoomlaWorks' AllVideos plugin, Akeeba Backup Professional and, of course, Admin Tools itself.
------------------------------------	--

Allow direct access, except .php files, to these directories	Direct access to all files (except for .php files) will be granted if they are inside any of the directories in this list. Normally you should only need to add your forum's attachments, avatars and image galleries directories, or other directories where you only intend to store media files. The example is Agora forum's user files directory. As with all similar options, add one directory per line, without a trailing slash.
--	---

Allow direct access, including .php files, to these directories	This option should be used as sparingly as possible. Each and every directory placed in this list is no longer protected by Server Protection and can be potentially used as an entry point to hacking your site. As far as we know there are only three cases when its use is even marginally justifiable:
---	---

- If you have installed another Joomla!, WordPress, phpBB, Coppermine gallery or any other PHP application in a subdirectory of your site. For example, if you are trying to restore a copy of your site inside a directory named `test` in your site's root you have to add `test` to this list. This is the one and only usage scenario which doesn't compromise your site's security.
- Some templates and template frameworks may wrap their CSS and Javascript inside PHP files in order to deliver them compressed to your browser. While this is a valid technique, it's possible that the list of PHP files is too big to track down and include in the first list of the Exceptions section. In this case you may consider putting the template subdirectory containing those files in this list.
- Some extensions do something silly: they place files inside your site's `tmp` or `cache` directories and expect them to be directly accessible from the web. This is plain wrong because these directories are designed to be protected system directories where direct access should not be allowed, most notably because they might contain sensitive information. However, if you have such extensions —most notably certain Javascript and CSS minifiers— you need a way to allow direct access to those directories.

If you decide that convenience is better than security we can't stop you. Add `tmp` and `cache` to this list and wish for the best. You are opening a security hole on your site and you do it at your own risk and potential peril.



While it might seem very tempting to put several Joomla! system directories in here, like components and templates, don't. That's right. Do not do that. It is like using a tactical weapon to kill a mosquito in the same room as you. The mosquito will hardly ever survive, but you will go down with it. Or, in computing terms, you allow potential hackers to use any security vulnerabilities you haven't had the chance to fix yet in order to upload and *execute* malicious code. You killed the mosquito (the access problems you had with an extension) but you accidentally helped to take down your site. Ouch! Even if the chance of this happening is about one in ten thousand, are you willing to take that risk *on your own site*?

In order to figure out which custom exceptions you need to add on your site, take a look at the [How to determine which exceptions are required](#) section.

## Warning

Windows users beware! *Do not* use Windows' path separator (the backlash - \) to separate directories! We are talking about directories as they appear in URLs, so you should always use the URL path separator (forward slash - /) in those settings. In other words `some/long/path` is correct, `some\long\path` is WRONG.

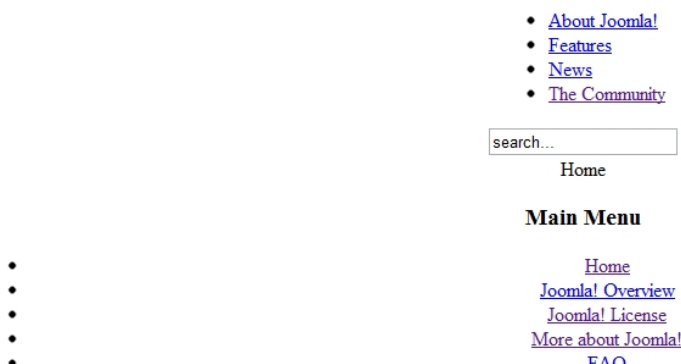
### 6.2.1. How to determine which exceptions are required

After applying the Server Protection script you may notice that some of your extensions do no longer work properly or, even worse, at all. Sometimes your site may even look like something's missing or like CSS and Javascript no longer loads. Don't be afraid and don't rush into turning off the Server Protection. Determining which exceptions are required is easy and takes only a few minutes of your time. I promise, it's as exciting, fancy and fulfilling as the televised CSI work. On the upside, once you determine them on one site you can reuse them on all sites having that extension installed. You will quickly end up with your "master" exceptions list which you'll be able to apply to all of your sites without a second thought.

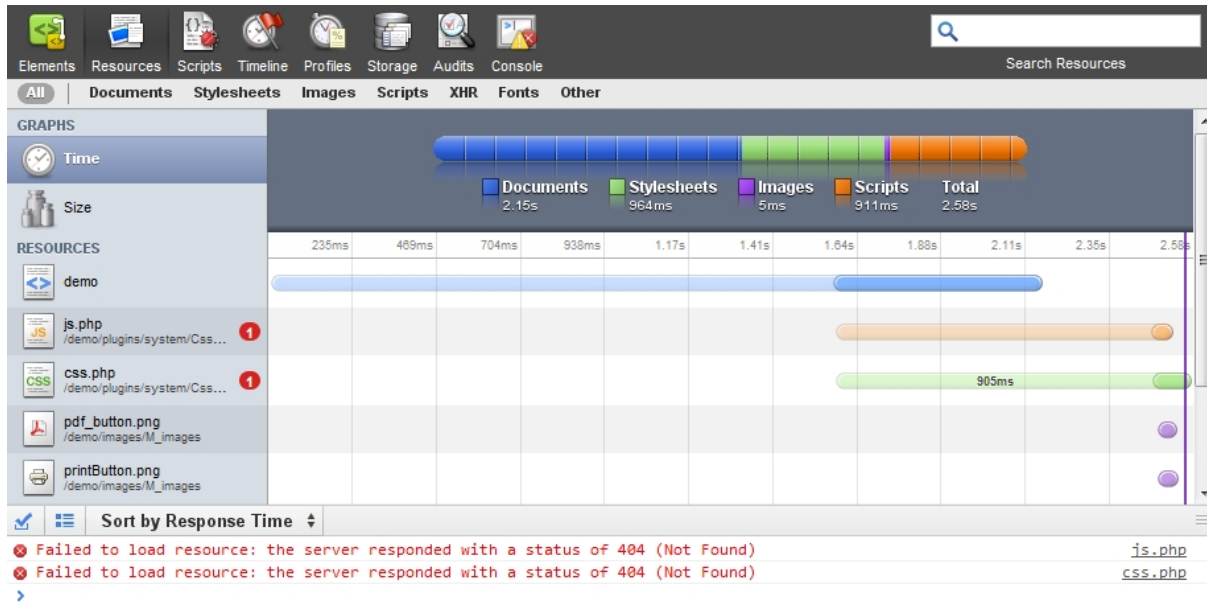
In the following example we are going to use Google Chrome to detect access issues on a site. Similar tools are built-in in other major browsers, such as Safari and Internet Explorer 8. If you are using Firefox you can install FireBug and use its Net panel to detect the access issues.

Our first test case will be a site with the great [CssJsCompress JS/CSS minifier](#) plugin installed. The first indication that something went awry is that our site looks like all the CSS is gone:

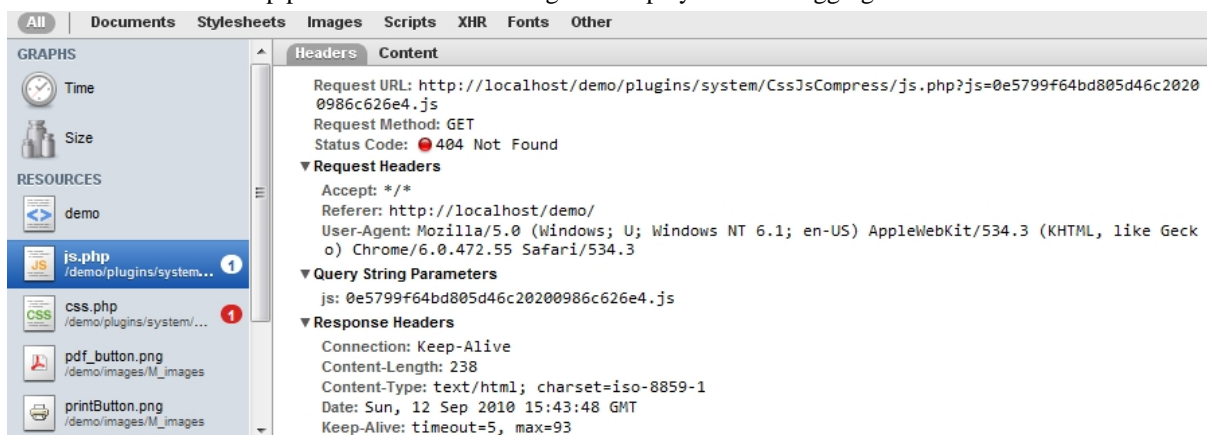
Joomla! 1.5 - 'Experience the Freedom!'. It has never been easier to create your own dynamic Web site. Manage all your content from the best CMS admin interface and in virtually any language you speak.



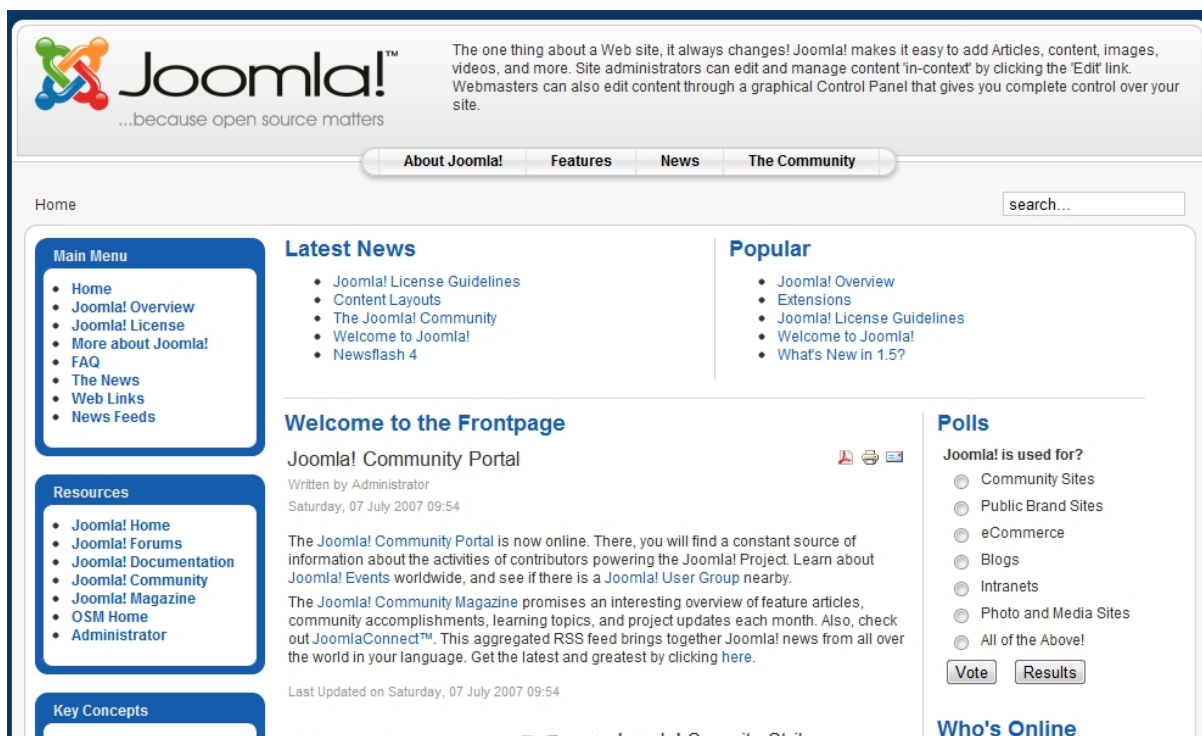
In order to figure out what is going wrong, we have to find out which of the files referenced by the page are throwing a 404 error (this means that they are filtered out by Server Protection), their naming pattern and location. Provided that you are using Chrome open up the Developer Tools pane by typing CTRL-SHIFT-J while viewing that broken page. Click on the Resources tab and, if prompted, enable tracking resources for this session. The page reloads and a list of files the browser tried to access appears:



The lower part of the window is the console. It kindly informs us that two files, `js.php` and `css.php`, failed to load with a status of 404. Bingo! We found the culprits, now let's take a look where they are coming from. Click on the `js.php` link in the console. The top part of the window changes to display some debugging info about that file:



the interesting part is the request URL: `http://localhost/demo/plugins/system/CssJsCompress/js.php?js=0e5799f64bd805d46c20200986c626e4.js`. As you guessed, the part after the question mark is a URL parameter and can be removed. We're left with `http://localhost/demo/plugins/system/CssJsCompress/js.php`, but we know that `http://localhost/demo` is our site's base URL. Remove it and you're left with `plugins/system/CssJsCompress/js.php`. Bullseye! Is there any change that this file can have a variable name? Nope. Does the file exist in our file system? Yes. This means that this is the exact file we need to put in our Allow direct access to these files list. Doing the exact same process for the `css.php` ends up with yet another file we have to exclude: `plugins/system/CssJsCompress/css.php`. Note the capitalization, OK? Copying and pasting those files in that exceptions option and regenerating the `.htaccess` file allows our site to load properly:



That said, sometimes you will see something like a long list of hard to guess filenames like `js-abc123456789fed0.php` and so on. If the file extension is anything but `.php` you can add the extension to the front-end or back-end allowed file types list and the directory in the respective list of directories where file type exceptions are allowed. If the culprits are PHP files, you have two options: stop using that extension or add the directory in the "Allow direct access, including `.php` files, to these directories" list.

## How about another example?

The previous example was dead easy to spot as the page looked like a big ugly mess which immediately made us figure out where the culprit is. This is not always the case. Sometimes a feature of an extension stops working with seemingly no explanation. In this test case we'll be using UddeIM. That was a real-world issue I had to deal with and this is the story of how I solved it.

## Note

An exception for UddeIM is already present in the default configuration. For the sake of documenting the procedure I removed it in order to demonstrate what is going on and how to fix it.


After installing the Server Protection users started complaining that they could not send me messages through UddeIM any more. At first I couldn't understand why, because I could use it without any problem at all. Then, I decided to create a simple unprivileged registered user with the intention to send a message to myself in order to test that. Then, I spotted the problem:

To:

Message

2500 characters left

Password

Security Code: 

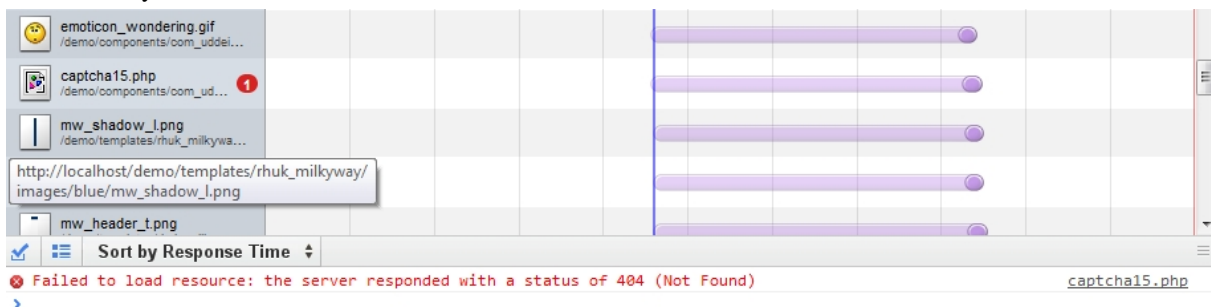
☐ copy to me
 ☒ Add CC: line

Send

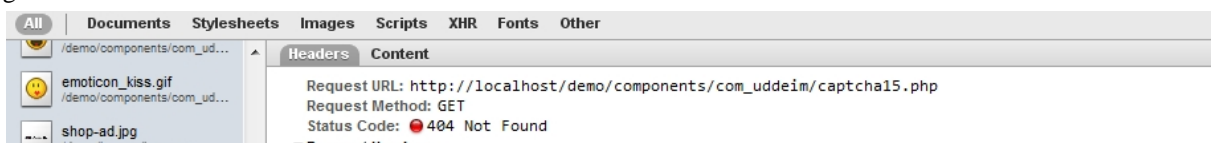
## Tip

When trying to figure out an issue affecting your users but not yourself, always try using a user with the same attributes as an afflicted user. Ideally, log in with the reporting user's account —with their permission, as you have to change their password— to witness the issue yourself. I got that piece of experience this the hard way.

Notice that broken image icon next to the Security Code? This is where a CAPTCHA should display - but only for Registered users. Hm... Why doesn't it get displayed? Time to use the Developer Tools in the browser, again. And here what it says:



There is a captcha15.php file not loading. Right. Where is it located? Let's click on the filename in the console to figure out:



So there it is! `components/com_uddeim/captcha15.php`. Add it to the Allow direct access to these files exceptions list, generate a new `.htaccess` and let's see the results:

Security Code:  

☐ copy to me ☒ Add CC: line

That was it. Solved!

## 6.3. Custom .htaccess rules

Sometimes you just need to add custom .htaccess rules beyond what the .htaccess Maker can offer. Such examples can be special directives your host told you to include in your .htaccess file to enable PHP5, change the server's default error documents and so on. If you are an advanced user you may also want to write your own advanced rules to further customize the behaviour of the Server Protection. The two options in this section allow you to do that.

The contents of the Custom .htaccess rules at the top of the file text area will be output at the top of the file, just after the RewriteEngine On directive. You should put custom exception rules and, generally, anything which should run before the protection and security rules in here.

The contents of the Custom .htaccess rules at the bottom of the file text area are appended to the end of the .htaccess file. This is the place to put stuff like directives to enable PHP5 and any optimizations which should run only after the request has passed through the security and server protection rules.

## 6.4. Optimisation and utility

This section contains directives which are of utilitarian value and bound to save you some time:

Force index.php parsing before index.html	Some servers attempt to serve index.html before index.php. This has the implication that trying to access your site's root, e.g. <code>http://www.example.com</code> , will attempt to serve an index.html first. If this file doesn't exist, it will try to serve index.php. However, all of our Joomla! sites only have the index.php, so this checking slows them down unnecessarily on each page request. This rule works around this problem. Do note that some servers do not allow this and will result in a blank page or Internal Server Error page.
Set default expiration time to 1 hour	If your server has mod_expires installed and activated, enabling this option will cause all files and pages served from the site to have an expiration time of 1 hour, which means that the browser will not try to load them over the network before one hour elapses. This is a very desirable feature, as it speeds up your site.
Automatically compress static resources	Enabling this option instructs the server to send plain text, HTML, XML, CSS, XHTML, RSS and Javascript pages and files to the browser after compressing them with GZip. This significantly reduces the amount of data transferred and speeds up the site. On the downside some very old browsers, like Internet Explorer 6, might have trouble loading the site.
Redirect index.php to the site's root	Normally, accessing your site as <code>http://www.example.com</code> and <code>http://www.example.com/index.php</code> will result in the same page being loaded. Except for the cosmetic issue of this behaviour it may also be bad for search engine optimization as search engines understand this as two different pages with the same content ("duplicate content"). Enabling this option will redirect requests to index.php, without additional parameter, to your site's root overriding this issue.
Redirect www and non-www addresses	Most web servers are designed to treat www and non-www URLs in the same way. For example, if your site is <code>http://www.example.com</code> then most servers will also display it if called as <code>http://example.com</code> . This has many adverse effects. For starters, if a user accesses the www

site, logs in and then visits the non-www site he's no longer logged in, causing a functional issue with your site's users. Moreover, the duplicate content rules also apply in this case. That's why we suggest that you enable one of the redirection settings of this option. The different settings are:

- Do not redirect. It does no redirection (turns this feature off)
- Redirect non-www to www. Requests to the non-www site will be redirected to the www site, e.g. `http://example.com` will be redirected to `http://www.example.com`.
- Redirect www to non-www. Requests to the www site will be redirected to the non-www site, e.g. `http://www.example.com` will be redirected to `http://example.com`.

Redirect this (old) domain name to the new one

Sometimes you have to migrate your site to a new domain, as we did migrating from `joomlapack.net` to `akeebabackup.com`. Usually this is done transparently, having both domains attached to the same site on the hosting level. However, while a visitor can access the old domain name, the address bar on his browser will still show the old domain name and search engines will believe that you have set up a duplicate content site, sending to the darkest hole of search engine results. Not good! So, you'd better redirect the old domain to the new domain with a 301 redirection to alert both users and search engines about the name change. This is what this option does. You can include several old domains separated by commas. For example:

`joomlapack.net , www.joomlapack.net`

will redirect all access attempts to `joomlapack.net` and `www.joomlapack.net` to the new domain.

Force HTTPS for these URLs (do not include the domain name)

Under regular circumstances Joomla! should be able to automatically redirect certain menu items to a secure (HTTPS) address. However, this is not possible if the HTTPS domain name and the HTTP domain name are not the same, as is casual with many shared hosts. Since Admin Tools supports custom HTTPS domain names you can use this feature to make up for the lack of functionality in Joomla! itself. Use one URL per site and do not include `http://` and your domain name. For example, if you want to redirect `http://www.example.com/eshop.html` to `https://www.example.com/eshop.html` you have to enter `eshop.html` in a new line of this field. Easy, isn't it?

## 6.5. System configuration

### Warning

If you backup and restore your site on a new host you **MUST** change these configuration parameters to reflect your new server configuration manually. In fact, you must remove your `.htaccess` file, change these parameters and then let Admin Tools create a new `.htaccess` file before you can use your site's front-end.

This final section contains all the options which let the `.htaccess` maker know some of the most basic information pertaining your site and which are used to create the rules for some of the options in the previous section.

Host name for HTTPS requests (without `https://`)

Enter the site's domain name for secure (HTTPS) connections. By default, Admin Tools assumes it is the same as your site's domain, but you have to verify it as it may be different on some hosts, especially on shared hosts. Do not use the `https://` prefix, just the domain name and path to your site. For example, if the address is `https://www.example.com/joomla` then type in `www.example.com/joomla`.

Host name for HTTP requests (without `http://`)

Enter the site's domain name for regular (HTTP) connections. By default, Admin Tools assumes it is the same as the address you are connected to right now, but you have to verify it. Do not use the `http://` prefix, just the domain name and path to your site. For example, if the address to your site's root is `http://www.example.com/joomla` then type in `www.example.com/joomla`.

Follow Symlinks	This option adds the "Options +FollowSymlinks" directive to your .htaccess file. On some hosts this is already defined in the system-wide configuration and you are not allowed to set this option. In fact, on those servers and only on those servers, you will get an Internal Server Error or a blank page if you do. On servers which do not have it set up server wide you must enable it for the correct operation of your Joomla! site.
Base directory of your site	This is the directory where your site is installed. For example, if it is installed in a directory named joomla and you access it on a URL similar to <code>http://www.example.com/joomla</code> you have to type in <code>/joomla</code> in here. If your site is installed on the root of your domain, please use a single forward slash for this field: <code>/</code>

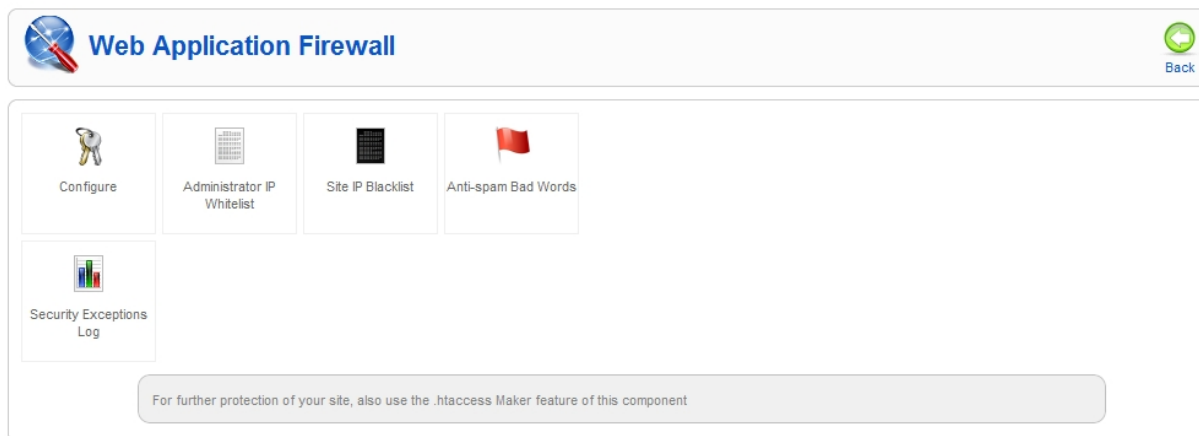
## 7. Web Application Firewall

### Note

This feature is only available in the Professional release

The Web Application Firewall feature of Admin Tools is designed to offer real-time protection against the most common fingerprinting attacks, used by attackers to deduct information about your site in order to tailor an attack to it, and the most common attacks. The real-time protection is performed by the "System - Admin Tools" plugin (`plg_admintools`). Before configuring Admin Tools' WAF you have to make sure that the plugin is published and it's the first to run, i.e. it should appear first in the ordering menu. These conditions are automatically applied when you install the Admin Tools bundle. However, if you have installed more system plugins make sure that `plg_admintools` is published before all other system plugins. If not, the protection offered will not be thorough.

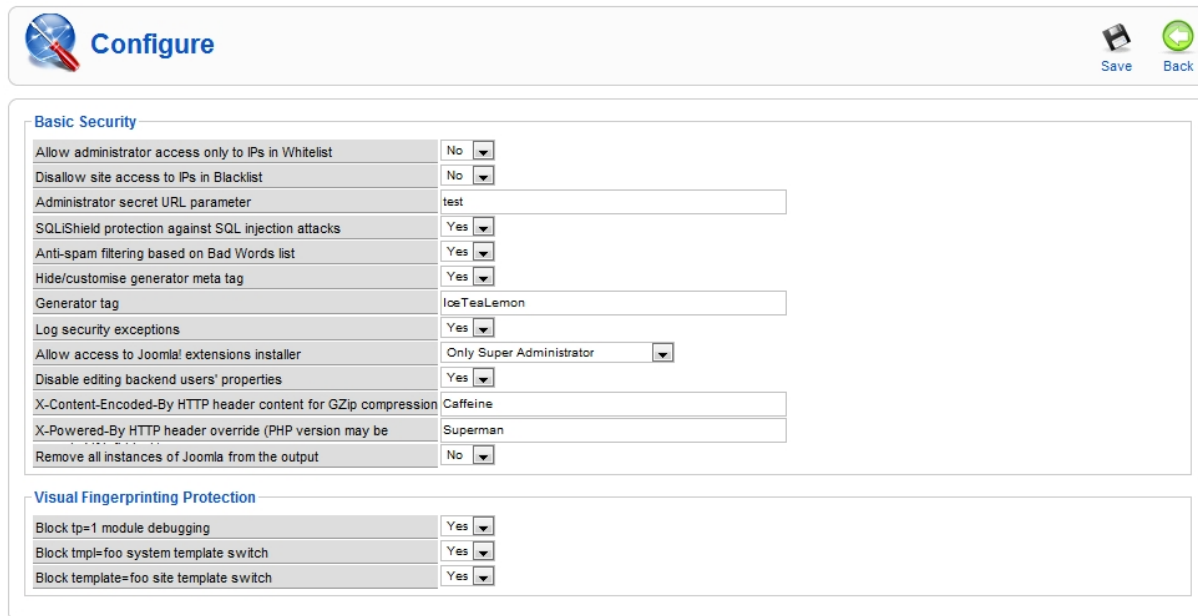
When you launch the Web Application Firewall feature of Admin Tools you are presented with its panel page:



Clicking on any icon will launch the respective sub-tool. The Back button on the upper right-hand corner will get you back to the Control Panel page.



## 7.1. Configure



Basic Security	
Allow administrator access only to IPs in Whitelist	No
Disallow site access to IPs in Blacklist	No
Administrator secret URL parameter	test
SQLShield protection against SQL injection attacks	Yes
Anti-spam filtering based on Bad Words list	Yes
Hide/customise generator meta tag	Yes
Generator tag	JoeTeaLemon
Log security exceptions	Yes
Allow access to Joomla! extensions installer	Only Super Administrator
Disable editing backend users' properties	Yes
X-Content-Encoded-By HTTP header content for GZip compression	Caffeine
X-Powered-By HTTP header override (PHP version may be)	Superman
Remove all instances of Joomla from the output	No

Visual Fingerprinting Protection	
Block tp=1 module debugging	Yes
Block tmpl=foo system template switch	Yes
Block template=foo site template switch	Yes

This sub-tool is where all the configuration fine-tuning of the firewall takes place. By default, none of these options are enabled during installation. You will have to enable them manually. Once you are content with your options click on Save to save the changes and return to the WAF panel page, or Back to return without saving.

### Important

If you do something wrong and you inadvertently lock yourself out of the administrator area of your site, do not panic! Read this section about regaining entrance.

The first section of the WAF configuration is called Basic Security and contains the following options:

Allow administrator access only to IPs in Whitelist	When enabled, only IPs in the Whitelist (see the following sections of this documentation about configuring it) will be allowed to access the administrator area of the site. All other attempts to access the administrator pages will be redirected to the site's home page. Be careful when using this feature! If you haven't added your own IP to the Whitelist you will get locked out of your administrator area!
Disallow site access to IPs in Blacklist	When enabled, if the visitor's IP is in the Blacklist (see the following sections of this documentation about configuring it) they will immediately get a 403 Forbidden error message upon trying to access your site.
Administrator secret URL parameter	Normally, you can access your site's administrator area using a URL similar to <code>http://www.example.com/administrator</code> . Potential hackers already know that and will try to access your site's administrator area the same way. From that point they can try to brute force their way in (guess your username and password) or simply use the fact that an administrator area exists to deduct that your site is running Joomla! and attack it. By entering a word here, you are required to include it as a URL parameter in order to access your administrator area. For instance, if you enter the word <i>test</i> here you will only be able to access your site's administrator area with a URL similar to <code>http://www.example.com/administrator?test</code> . All other attempts to access the administrator area will be redirected to the site's home page. If you do not wish to use this feature, leave this field blank.



## Important

The secret URL parameter *must* start with a letter. If it starts with a number, you will immediately get a "Illegal variable `_files` or `_env` or `_get` or `_post` or `_cookie` or `_server` or `_session` or globals passed to script" error when trying to access your site's administrator back-end. It should also contain only lowercase and uppercase ASCII characters and numbers (a-z, A-Z, 0-9) in order to ensure the widest compatibility with all possible browser and server combinations.

Email this address on successful back-end login	Enter an email address which will get notified whenever someone successfully logs in to your site's administrator back-end. If you do not wish to use this feature, leave this field blank. If you enter an email address, every time someone logs in to the administrator area an email will be sent out to this email address stating the username and site name. This allows you to get instant notification of unexpected administrator area logins which are a tell-tale sign of a hacked site. In that unlikely event, immediately log in to your site's back-end area, go to Extensions, Admin Tools and click on the Emergency Off-Line Mode button. This will cut off the attacker's access to the entirety of your site and gives you ample time to upgrade your site and its extensions, as well as change the password (and maybe the username) of the compromised Super Administrator account. For maximum security, after taking your site back on-line, log out, clear your browser's cookies and cache and log in again.
Email this address on failed administrator login	Enter an email address which will get notified whenever someone tries to log in to your site's administrator back-end but is denied access. If you do not wish to use this feature, leave this field blank. If you enter an email address, every time someone unsuccessfully tries to log in to the administrator area an email will be sent out to this email address stating the username and site name. This allows you to get instant notification of unexpected administrator area login attempts which are a tell-tale sign of a hacked site. In that unlikely event, immediately log in to your site's back-end area, go to Extensions, Admin Tools and click on the Emergency Off-Line Mode button. This will cut off the attacker's access to the entirety of your site and gives you ample time to upgrade your site and its extensions, as well as change the password (and maybe the username) of a potentially compromised Super Administrator account. For maximum security, after taking your site back on-line, log out, clear your browser's cookies and cache and log in again.
SQLiShield protection against SQL injection attacks	When enabled, Admin Tools will try to detect common SQL injection attacks against your site and block them. Do note that this is not a watertight solution. Some attacks may still pass through and there is a very low chance of false positives, i.e. legitimate requests being identified as SQLi attacks.
Cross Site Scripting block (XSSShield)	When enabled, Admin tools will try to detect common cross-site scripting (XSS) attacks and block them. The filtering is able to detect many such attacks, comprising of malicious Javascript and PHP code, but it can not be exhaustive. Hackers find new types of attack every day. You are advised to follow sane security practices (like updating all of your extensions and templates to their latest releases immediately) on top of using this feature.
Malicious User Agent block (MUAShield)	Many hackers will try to access your site using a browser configured to send malicious PHP code in its user agent string (a small piece of text used to describe the browser to your server). The idea is that buggy log processing software will parse it and allow the hacker to gain control of your website. When enabled, this feature allows Admin Tools to detect such attacks and block the request.
CSRF/Anti-spam form protection (CSRFShield)	One of the major concerns regarding web forms –like login forms, contact forms, etc– is that they can be exploited by automated scripts (bots). This is usually performed to send spam messages or brute-force passwords. Admin Tools has two methods to prevent such abuse, depending on the setting of this option:

- **No.** Turns off this feature.
- **Basic.** Performs basic referer filtering. If the browser of the visitor reports that the previous page was not one belonging to your site, Admin Tools will block processing of the form. This is enough to thwart script kiddies and unsophisticated spam bots, but will do nothing for more serious attacks.
- **Advanced.** On top of the basic protection, Admin Tools will automatically inject a hidden field on all forms. Spambots will usually try to fill all fields on a form, including the hidden one. When this happens, Admin Tools will block the request. This is a better method, but it's much slower and not recommended for high-traffic (several dozen of thousands of visitors per day) websites.

#### Remote File Inclusion block (RFIShield)

Some hackers will try to force a vulnerable extension into loading PHP code directly from their server. This is done by passing an `http(s)://` or `ftp://` URL in their request, pointing to their malicious site. When this option is enabled, Admin Tools will look for such cases, try to fetch the remote URL and scan its contents. If it is found to contain PHP code, it will block the request.

### Important

If your site starts throwing white pages when submitting a URL in your site's front-end, please disable this option. The white page means that your server is not susceptible to this kind of attack and doesn't properly advertise this to Admin Tools when requested. In this case, Admin Tools crashes while trying to scan the contents of the remote location, causing the white page error. Disabling this option in such a case poses no security risk.

#### Direct File Inclusion shield (DFIShield)

Some hackers try to trick vulnerable components into loading arbitrary files. Depending on the vulnerable component, the file will either be output verbatim or parsed as a PHP file. This allows attackers to disclose sensitive information about your site or run malicious code uploaded to your site through another vulnerable vector, e.g. an unfiltered upload of executable PHP code. When this option is enabled, Admin Tools will search the request parameters for anything which looks like a file path. If one is found, it will be scanned. If it is found to contain PHP code, the request will be rejected.

#### Uploads scanner (UploadShield)

When this option is enabled, Admin Tools will proactively scan all files which are uploaded through Joomla!. If any of these files is found to contain even a single line of PHP code, the request is blocked. This can prevent some kinds of very tricky attacks, like uploading malicious PHP code wrapped inside avatar images. Do note that not all servers support this feature. If the uploaded files directory is blocked by `open_basedir` restrictions, no scanning will take place. If unsure, ask your host if they have put `open_basedir` restrictions which block access to the PHP uploads directory. If they answer affirmatively, this Admin Tools feature will not work unless this restriction is lifted.

### Warning

**NOT ALL COMPONENTS ALLOW ADMIN TOOLS TO SCAN THEIR UPLOADS!** Some components do not use Joomla!'s `index.php` entry point file. Instead, they use their own. Since these uploads do not pass through the Joomla! application, Admin Tools' code doesn't run and these uploaded files are not scanned. In this case, if that component is found vulnerable, your site will still be at risk. We suggest avoiding such components. How can you tell? It's simple. If you use the front-end protection feature of .htaccess Maker and you had to add an exception for a component, it doesn't use Joomla!'s `index.php` and is potentially vulnerable to this kind of code upload attacks.

Anti-spam filtering based on Bad Words list	When enabled, all requests containing at least one word in the Bad Words list (configured separately, see the next sessions) will be blocked. By default the Bad Words list is empty; you have to configure it to match your site's needs. One good idea is to include pharmaceutical, luxury watches and shoes brand names, as this makes up the majority of comment and contact spam received on web sites.
Hide/customise generator meta tag	All Joomla! installations set the meta generator tag, a piece of HTML in the header of all pages, to advertise the fact that your site is running on Joomla!. This information is cached by search engines and is exploited by attackers to deduct that your site is running Joomla! when looking for potential targets. Disabling the generator tag normally requires modifying Joomla! core files. Instead, you can enable this option and enter a custom value for the generator tag in the next option. Be inventive! Use something silly, like "A million monkeys with typewriters" or cloud the water by assigning the name of another CMS, like "Drupal" or "WordPress".
Generator tag	When the previous option is enabled, this is what the generator meta tag's value will be.
Log security exceptions	<p>It is suggested to keep this option enabled. When enabled, all potential security breaches — blocked by Admin Tools— will be logged in the database and made available under the Security Exceptions Log tool.</p> <p>Turning on this option will also create a file named <code>admintools_breaches.log</code> in your site's <code>logs</code> directory. This contains all the debugging details of what Admin Tools detected whenever it issues a 403 error. When asking for support, please include this log or at least the portion relevant to the 403 error page you are receiving in order for us to better serve you. Do note that your logs directory <b>MUST</b> be writeable for the log file to be produced.</p>
Email this address on security exceptions	Enter an email address which will get notified whenever a security exception happens on your site. A "security exception" is anything which triggers Web Application Firewall. This is useful to get an ahead warning in the event of a bot trying to perform a series of attacks on your site.
Allow access to Joomla! extensions installer	<p>This options determines who has access to Joomla!'s extensions installer. If you are not aware of this yet, both Super Administrators and regular Administrators have access to it. Given the fact that the extensions installer can be used to insert executable code and run database SQL commands on your site, it can be exploited for insider attacks. In fact, a potential attacker only needs to compromise an Administrator account to "own" (wreck havoc on) your site. The Joomla! security team is aware of this claim, complete with detailed instructions demonstrating this technique, yet they have decided to dismiss it as a "non issue". I'd rather be safe than sorry and I bet you do too. This is why this option exists and has the following possible settings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Administrator and above (default).</b> Both Administrators and Super Administrators have access to Joomla!'s Extensions Installer. This is the default, insecure, Joomla! behaviour.</li> <li>• <b>Only Super Administrator.</b> Administrators do not have access to the extensions installer, only Super Administrators can access it. This is the recommended setting.</li> <li>• <b>Nobody.</b> Complete lock down of the extensions installer, nobody can access it, unless this option is changed to a lower setting.</li> </ul>
Disable editing backend users' properties	When enabled, trying to modify the settings of an existing or create a new a Manager, Administrator or Super Administrator will fail.
X-Content-Encoded-By HTTP header content	When you turn on the GZip compression in your site's Global Configuration, Joomla! adds an invisible HTTP header advertising its name. Despite you not being able to see it, attackers' tools can see it and can use it to deduct that your site is a potential attack target. Entering something different here will fool those scanning attacks. Be creative!

for GZip compression

X-Powered-By HTTP header override (PHP version may be revealed if left blank)	Just like Joomla!, PHP is head over cliff into the vanity game. All PHP sites include an invisible HTTP header advertising not only the fact that you are running PHP, but even the PHP version you are using! This is invaluable information to a potential attacker, especially if your host has an outdated version of PHP (FYI, that's a terrifying 90% of live hosts among our users). Be creative! Use something crazy and unexpected.
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Remove all instances of Joomla from the output	Use this option with EXTREME CAUTION. When enabled, it will strip all instances of "Joomla!" and "Joomla" from the HTML output of your web pages. If your site's name, directory name or a SEF URL path includes the word "Joomla" it will break your site. This also means that if you try using this option with a site using the default Joomla! sample content you are heading for disaster and a broken site experience. You have been warned. In all other cases it should be safe enabling this option, as it makes sure that you have not accidentally left behind any traces which can be used by a potential attacker to deduct that your site is running on Joomla!.
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The second section is called Visual Fingerprinting Protection and contains options to turn off several debugging features of Joomla! which are routinely exploited by attackers looking for Joomla! sites to launch their attacks against. The idea is that potential attackers use automated tools to scan thousands of sites, trying to identify which of them run Joomla!. Using these options, the options in the previous section and the .htaccess Maker's feature will "cloak" your site against such fingerprinting (scanning) attacks.

Block tp=1 module debugging	When you append <code>?tp=1</code> to a Joomla! website URL it dumps all the module positions on the page. For a live example, have fun with <a href="http://www.joomla.org?tp=1">www.joomla.org?tp=1</a> [ <a href="http://www.joomla.org?tp=1">http://www.joomla.org?tp=1</a> ]. Enabling this option will turn off this hidden Joomla! feature.
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Block <code>tmpl=foo</code> system template switch	One of the lesser known Joomla! features are its system templates. Whenever an error occurs or you put your site offline, Joomla! loads the respective system template. Passing the name of the template in the URL by appending, say, <code>?tmpl=offline</code> allows you to test those templates without having to actually produce an error or put your site off-line. For a live example, have fun with <a href="http://www.joomla.org/?tmpl=offline">http://www.joomla.org/?tmpl=offline</a> . Enabling this option will turn off this hidden Joomla! feature. Do note that <code>tmpl=system</code> and <code>tmpl=component</code> will be permitted, as they are required by some extensions to work.
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List of allowed <code>tmpl=</code> keywords	The list of <code>tmpl</code> keywords which should be allowed of your site, as a comma separated list. At the very least you MUST include <code>system</code> and <code>component</code> , otherwise Joomla! will not work properly. Default value: <code>component,system</code>
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Block <code>template=foo</code> site template switch	Another Joomla! hidden feature is the ability to switch between installed templates by passing a special URL parameter. For instance, if you want to apply the JA Purity template, just pass the parameter <code>?template=ja_purity</code> . For a live example, have fun with <a href="http://www.joomla.org/?template=ja_purity">http://www.joomla.org/?template=ja_purity</a> . Enabling this option will turn off this hidden Joomla! feature.
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Bad Behaviour integration allows you to enable the Bad Behaviour filtering algorithms. In short, these algorithms try to detect spammers and hackers based on the way they try to access your website and block them before they do any damage to your site. You have the following options:

Enable Bad Behaviour filter	Toggles this feature on/off
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Strict Mode	When enabled, the filter becomes more strict. On the downside, it may accidentally cut off access of legitimate bots, like search engine indexers of specific search engines. We generally recommend turning this off.
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**Project Honeypot HTTP:BL key** Project Honeypot is a collective effort to detect spammers, email harversters and crackers. Its HTTP:BL service allows participants to query the IP addresses of their visitors and figure out if it is a malicious user behind it. If you provide your Project Honeypot key, Admin Tools will check the IP address of each visitor and, if it is a malicious user, it will block him. You can sign up for Project Honeypot and get your key at [http://www.projecthoneypot.org/httpbl\\_configure.php](http://www.projecthoneypot.org/httpbl_configure.php).

**White list IPs (comma separated list)** Give a list of IP addresses which should not be blocked by Bad Behaviour or Project Honeypot HTTP:BL filtering. We strongly recommend adding the IP address of PayPal's IPN (66.211.170.66) to this list

Finally, you can easily Auto-ban Repeat Offenders. This feature allows you to automatically ban IPs triggering security exceptions. This can be prove to be an effective measure against malicious users who try to probe your site for vulnerabilities. You **MUST** enable logging of security exceptions for this feature to work. You can set the following options to define how Admin Tools will behave in those cases:

**IP blocking of repeat offenders** When set to yes, the IP address of repeat offenders will be automatically banned based on the rest of the settings

**Block after** Chose how many attacks have to happen within how much time. For example, if you set it to 3 attacks in 1 hour, Admin Tools will ban a IP address from which at least 3 attacks have been blocked within the last hour.

**Block for this long** How long the block will last. For example, setting it to 1 day will block all access from this IP address for a whole day.

**Show this message to blocked IPs** Allows you to show a specific message to blocked IP addresses. You may want to explain to the user that his IP was blocked because suspicious activity was detected as originating from his IP address.

## Warning

Blacklisting makes no discriminations. If, for example, you try to access your administrator area without a secret word it will block your IP address and you won't be able to access your own site. In that case, follow the manual override procedure to disable Admin Tools' plugin and regain access to your site, then proceed to disable the auto-ban feature.

### 7.1.1. Help, I have been locked out of my site's administrator area!

It's possible to accidentally lock yourself out of the administrator area, especially when using the IP whitelisting or IP blacklisting options of the Web Application Firewall. The easiest way to work around this issue is using an FTP application or your hosting control panel's File Manager to rename a file.

Go inside the `plugins/system/admintools` directory on your site. You will see a file named `main.php`. Rename it to `main-disable.php`. This will turn disable the Web Application Firewall from executing and you can access your site's back-end again. After you have fixed the cause of your issue remember to rename `main-disable.php` back to `main.php`, otherwise your site will remain unprotected!

## 7.2. Exceptions

This page allows you to configure exceptions to the WAF filtering rules. Why you need that? Some components are designed to properly and safely parse and use data which triggers WAF protection rules. Most usually, a component accepts an absolute path to files on your server or can parse complex data which normally trigger WAF's XSSShield filter. Without any exceptions set, these components would be blocked and you wouldn't be able to properly use your site. The workaround was to disable WAF's filters, but this ended up in degrading the security of your site. Using the WAF Exceptions view you can fine tune which components, views and query parameters are in the "safe list" and should never be blocked.

## Note

WAF Exceptions is a very useful and powerful tool. It's also possible that you apply too many protections, opening potential security wholes in the firewall. Be very cautious when using it.

WAF Exceptions are defined by specifying a combination of three things:

- *Component*. Which component the exception applies to. For example, if you want to disable filtering for a query parameter in JCE you will have to set this to `com_jce`. If you want to apply the exception to all components, no matter what, leave this blank.
- *View*. Each component has one or several views. When you turn off SEF you see something like `index.php?option=com_foobar&view=example&id=1`. Note the `view=example` part in this URL; this tells Joomla! that the view name (i.e. the area of the component we want to use) is *example*. As you might have guessed, the View option in a WAF Exception allows you to target the exception to exactly one view. If you leave it blank, the exception will match all views.

## Important

Joomla! internally translates SEF URLs to non-SEF URLs. So, even if you use Joomla!'s SEF URLs or any third party SEF extension, the view and query parameters are always set - you may just not see them. It is strongly recommended to turn SEF off while setting up WAF Exceptions to avoid mistakes.

- *Query Parameter*. Everything after the question mark in a non-SEF URL is called the URL query. You will see a lot of key/value pairs, like `id=1, category=1:test` and so on. The word at the left hand side of the equals sign is called the *Query Parameter*. The same-named parameter in WAF Exceptions allows you to target a very specific query parameter. If you leave it blank, all query parameters will be matched.

## Warning

You can not leave all three options blank. That would match all components, all views and all query strings or, in other words, EVERY PAGE you access. This would imply that WAF would be effectively turned off. Admin Tools detects an attempt to do that and won't allow you to perform such a change.

## Understanding WAF exceptions

The best way to understand WAF exceptions is by some practical examples.

**Whole-component exception.** Set component to `com_jce`, leave view and query parameter empty. This tells WAF that if it sees a request for JCE's utility component (`com_jce`) it should turn off WAF no matter which view or which query parameters are set. Essentially, WAF is turned off for the entire JCE component.

**Excepting a single component's view.** Let's say we want to disable WAF for all front-end logins to avoid a complex password throwing a 403 error to our users. Front-end logins are handled by `com_user`'s login view. So just set component to `com_user`, view to `login` and leave the query parameter blank. WAF is now disabled for the login/logout page of your site.

**Excepting a query parameter of a specific component and view.** Let's say we have a `com_foobar` component whose test view accepts a `pass` parameter. Strong passwords may accidentally trigger WAF. Just create a new exception where component is `com_foobar`, view is `test` and query parameter is `pass`. WAF will not deal with that specific query parameter on that specific component and view, but will be triggered by unsafe content passed in any other query parameter on that particular view.

**Excepting a query parameter across all components and views.** Let's say that you see a lot of 403s in your site because various components use a password query parameter to accept passwords and, as we mentioned above, com-

plex passwords can trigger WAF. Instead of hunting down all the views across all components, you can simply leave component and view empty and set the query parameter to `password`. From now on, when WAF sees a password parameter coming into Joomla! it will not try to apply its protection filters against it. If other query parameters come in with the user request they will be filtered and, if they contain unsafe content, the request will still be blocked.

## 7.3. Administrator IP Whitelist

This page allows you to manage the IP Whitelist, defining the list of IPs or IP blocks which have access to your site's administrator area. The management is done using the standard Joomla! toolbar buttons. Clicking on an entry, or checking its box and clicking on Edit will allow you to edit the entry. Clicking on the New button allows you to add an IP/IP range. Checking one or several items in the list and clicking on Delete will remove them from the list.

The Edit/Add page looks like this:

### Tip

You current IP address is displayed right above the edit box. Make sure that is is the first to include so that you do not lock yourself out of your site's administrator area!

In the IP Address Range box you can enter an IP or IP range in one of the following ways:

- A single IP, e.g. 192.168.1.1
- A human readable block of IPs, e.g. 192.168.1.1-192.168.1.10
- An implied IP range, e.g. 192.168.1. for all IPs between 192.168.1.1 and 192.168.1.255, or 192.168. for all IPs between 192.168.0.1 through 192.168.255.255.
- A CIDR block [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classless\\_Inter-Domain\\_Routing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classless_Inter-Domain_Routing)], e.g. 192.168.1.1/8. If you don't know what this is, forget about it as you don't need it.
- A Subnet Mask [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subnetwork>] notation, e.g. 192.168.1.1/255.255.255.0

Do note that Admin Tools only supports IPv4 IPs. IPv6 is not supported, yet, as it has so far received minimal support from commercial hosts.

## Tip

You can use the Save & New to quickly add multiple entries without having to go back to the administration page and click on New all the time.

## 7.4. Site IP Blacklist

This page allows you to manage the IP Blacklist, defining the list of IPs or IP blocks which do not have access to your site. The management is done using the standard Joomla! toolbar buttons. Clicking on an entry, or checking its box and clicking on Edit will allow you to edit the entry. Clicking on the New button allows you to add an IP/IP range. Checking one or several items in the list and clicking on Delete will remove them from the list.

The Edit/Add page looks like this:

## Tip

Your current IP address is displayed right above the edit box. Make sure that you do not include it so that you do not lock yourself out of your site's administrator area!

In the IP Address Range box you can enter an IP or IP range in one of the following ways:

- A single IP, e.g. 192.168.1.1
- A human readable block of IPs, e.g. 192.168.1.1-192.168.1.10
- An implied IP range, e.g. 192.168.1. for all IPs between 192.168.1.1 and 192.168.1.255, or 192.168. for all IPs between 192.168.0.1 through 192.168.255.255.
- A CIDR block [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classless\\_Inter-Domain\\_Routing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classless_Inter-Domain_Routing)], e.g. 192.168.1.1/8. If you don't know what this is, forget about it as you don't need it.
- A Subnet Mask [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subnetwork>] notation, e.g. 192.168.1.1/255.255.255.0

Do note that Admin Tools only supports IPv4 IPs. IPv6 is not supported, yet, as it has so far received minimal support from commercial hosts.



## Tip

You can use the Save & New to quickly add multiple entries without having to go back to the administration page and click on New all the time.

## 7.5. Anti-spam Bad Words

This page allows you to manage the list of Bad Words. Their use will be forbidden on the site. If a query contains one of those words, it will result in a 403 error and it will optionally be logged in your Security Exceptions Log. You can use the standard Joomla! toolbar buttons to administer the list. All words are case insensitive, which means that they will be filtered no matter if they appear in lowercase, uppercase or mixed case in the request.

## Note

Some servers already include a server-side filter to avoid common spam words. If you receive an error — usually a 403 error or an error noting that you have an invalid request— while trying to save a word, do not panic. It's your server's filter kicking in. Just omit including the word you just tried to include, as it is already filtered very effectively by your server!

## 7.6. Security Exceptions Log

	Date	IP address	Reason	Target URL
<input type="checkbox"/>	2010-09-13 08:01:27	127.0.0.1	template= in URL	http://localhost/demo/administrator/index.php
<input type="checkbox"/>	2010-09-13 08:01:27	127.0.0.1	tmpl= in URL	http://localhost/demo/administrator/index.php
<input type="checkbox"/>	2010-09-13 07:58:15	127.0.0.1	Admin Query String	http://localhost/demo/administrator/index.php

A firewall is worth nothing if it can't log the attempts to override it. Most usually you will see that the same kind of attacks are coming from the same IP addresses over and over again. Using this log viewer facility you can dive into the log, spot those IPs and note them down so that you can ban them (put them in the Blacklist).

Below each IP there is a link reading Add to Black List or Remove from Black List. Clicking the former will add the IP address of the relevant record to the IP Black List and that IP will be denied access to your site. The latter removes the IP address from the black list.

## 7.7. Geographic blocking

Several users have asked for a consistent way to block visitors coming from specific countries or continents. While this adds no security —a clever cracker would just hide behind an anonymizing proxy— it may still be useful for inherently regional sites, such as e-shops able to deal with a handful of countries only.

The interface page of Admin Tools' Geographic Blocking feature allows you to select which countries and/or which continents you want to block. If it's checked, it will be blocked. When you're done selecting the continents or countries you want to block, click on Save.

Remember that Admin Tools uses MaxMind GeoLite database to match IPs to countries. This list is not static, i.e. it changes over time. We suggest downloading the latest version of MaxMind GeoLite database [[http://www.maxmind.com/app/geoip\\_country](http://www.maxmind.com/app/geoip_country)] every month in binary format, from <http://geolite.maxmind.com/download/geoip/database/GeoLiteCountry/GeoIP.dat.gz>. Extract the downloaded compressed file using gunzip on Linux, 7-Zip on Windows or BetterZIP on Mac OS X. It will result in a file named `GeoIP.dat`. Upload it to your site's `administrator/components/com_admintools/assets/geoip` directory overwriting the existing file.

## Important

Capitalization matters! You have to upload the file as `GeoIP.dat`, not `geoIP.dat` or `geoip.dat`.

## Should I use this feature?

We strongly believe that geographic blocking doesn't add anything to the security of your website. Most people think "cool, I can block those Russian spammers". Nothing could be further from truth than that. The intelligent spammers and crackers do not use a single computer in their country to launch their attacks on other sites. They are usually in control of a botnet, a collection of compromised computers around the world which do what they are told to. Using such a botnet, they can launch a spam operation whose traffic comes from different countries around the globe - even the country you live in. Clever crackers will also never use their real IP address to attack you. They usually use an anonymizing proxy or the TOR network. The immediate effect is that the traffic seemingly comes from another country or from a variety of different countries.

Then, there is the accuracy factor. MaxMind claims a 99% accuracy. On a site with 10,000 visitors per day this translates to 100 visitors every day reported as coming from a different country than they really do. This might not sound such a big deal, but imagine having an e-shop and losing those potential clients. It suddenly becomes quite a big deal.

All and all, we recommend common sense. IP filtering is like the bouncer at the door. You wouldn't expect to find a bouncer standing next to your bakery's door. Likewise, don't overdo it with geo blocking. Use it sparingly.

## 8. Database tools

Do note that these tools can be both found in Admin Tools' Control Panel page since Admin Tools 1.0 Stable. Previous versions used to have them in a separate page.

The database is the most important part of our websites. It holds all the data and most configuration options, i.e. everything which makes our site what it is. However, since data is being written to and deleted from the database, the database table are becoming slow or even corrupted. It's the same thing as what happens with hard drives. One table notorious for becoming very fragmented too fast is the sessions table. In fact, every time a guest user visits your site or a user logs in and logs out from your site this table starts becoming bloated until, one day, nobody can log in to your site, not even yourself. This is a very common issue, especially on high-traffic sites.

On a hard drive you know that you can always defragment it and run `chkdisk` or `fsck` (depending on your Operating System). For databases you have to go through a tedious process using a database administration tool, such as `phpMyAdmin`, to repair and optimize each and every table. Admin Tool's Database Tools are here to automate this tedious process for you!

There are two tools available:

- **Repair & Optimise Tables** will run the repair and optimisation process on all of your site's tables. If the process hangs for a long time after the first time you use it, run it again. The usual problem is that the Joomla! sessions table is so bloated that PHP times out waiting for your database server to optimise this table.

- Purge Sessions will purge (completely empty) and optimize only the sessions table. Doing so will log everybody out of the site, except for yourself. Use this option sparingly and only when you observe severe problem when users are trying to log into the site.

A cut-down version of the optimisation process, addressing only the sessions table, can be scheduled to run on a timely basis by using the parameters of the "System - Admin Tools" plugin of the Professional release.

## 9. Changing your database table prefix

By default, Joomla! installs with a database table prefix of `jos_` unless you specifically tell it to. Unfortunately, hackers know that, expect you to leave the default setting and adjust their attacks to that end. For more information about the issues of using the default database table prefix you can read my Joomla! Community Magazine article [<http://magazine.joomla.org/issues/Issue-Aug-2010/item/108-the-prefix-has-nothing-to-do-with-telephony>]. Admin Tools makes it dead easy to change this prefix on-the-fly with a single click

### Important

Take a backup of your site and *put your site off-line* before proceeding. In the unlikely event of a server crash in the middle of the process you will have to restore your site from the backup. You can always use the free Akeeba Backup [<http://www.akeebabackup.com>] component to take a full site backup, or use phpMyAdmin to export your database tables.

TODO: SCREENSHOT

The interface of this feature is very simple. In the "Current prefix" textbox on the top you can see what is your current prefix. In the "New prefix" textbox below you can type in the new database table prefix to use. By default, it contains a randomly created prefix. You can, of course, type in a different prefix. Prefixes must follow these rules:

- It must consist of 3 to 6 lowercase unaccented letters or numbers (a-z, 0-9) followed by an underscore (\_).
- It can not be one of the reserved prefixes, `jos_` or `bak_`.
- It can not be the same as the current prefix.
- It must not be already in use by any table in the database. For example, if you use a prefix `foo_` you must make sure that there is no table in your database whose name starts with `foo_`.

Don't worry if you get it wrong. Admin Tools will warn you. You must also make sure that the following conditions are met:

- Your `configuration.php` file in your site's root must be writable
- Alternatively, you have to enable Joomla!'s FTP options in the Global Configuration and make sure that you have saved your username and password.

If Admin Tools detects that it can not update your `configuration.php` file it will warn you and abort the database table prefix change.

When you're ready, click on the Change my prefix button. This will update your `configuration.php` file with the new prefix and will issue `ALTER TABLE` commands in your database to rename all of your Joomla! tables, including the tables used by installed extensions. If the rename fails, Admin Tools will try to roll back the changes.

It is recommended to demote the old user account to the Registered level. In order to do that, follow this simple procedure:

1. Edit the old user account and set Blocked to No and the user group to Registered. Apply the changes.

2. Edit again the user account and set Blocked to Yes. Finally, save the changes.

This is necessary for Joomla! not to complain with an error message of "Can't disable a Super Administrator".

## **I have not a Super Administrator with ID 62, but Admin Tools still complains**

The detection is based on a quite different method than what you might think. Admin Tools checks if there is a user with an ID lower than 62 (Joomla! 1.5) or 42 (Joomla! 1.6). If it's not found, it supposes that you are using the default Super Administrator ID. The reason for this strange check is the compatibility of the component with Joomla! 1.6. In Joomla! 1.6 there is no hard-coded Super Administrator group. Moreover, it's perfectly possible to set the ACLs of any group in such a way that it is almost equivalent with a Super Administrator, making a proper check quite impossible.

### **Important**

Having a Super Administrator with an ID of 63 or 64 is equally unsafe as having the default Super Administrator account. As a result, we always recommend creating a Super Administrator account with an ID less than the minimum user ID Joomla! can create through its interface (62 in Joomla! 1.5 and 42 in Joomla! 1.6).

## **This feature seems to have made no change on my site?**

Please note that this feature operates on the principle of copying and modifying user accounts. In short, the user with ID 62 or 42 (depending on your Joomla! version) is copied and assigned an ID less than 42. Then, the original user is disabled, its username and email is mangled using a random string and the password is randomized. If the user with the default ID (62 or 42) wasn't a Super Administrator, i.e. you had disabled it manually, there is no effective change on your site.

## **Why can't I get it to rename my tables?**

Admin Tools has to run two very important MySQL commands in order to work. The one is SHOW TABLE STATUS and the other is ALTER TABLE. It is possible that your host configuration does not allow your database user to execute either or both of these commands. If in doubt, please ask your host. Do not post on our forum for support; we can not guess if this is the case and we'll still tell you to ask your host.

# **10. Changing your database collation**

There are times where you install or restore a site on a server and realize that by the time you're halfway customization, accented and international characters won't work. More often than not, this happens with an extension you install. The explanation is very simple, really. Your database collation is most likely the MySQL default (latin1\_swedish\_ci) whereas Joomla! requires a UTF-8 encoding. On the other hand, some locales such as Japanese and Russian may need to use something different than UTF-8 to work properly.

In either case, changing your database collation is easy, but changing the collation of the tables already created in the database is a big pain. This is what Admin Tools' Change Database Collation feature excels at. With a single click it will change your database collation and all of your tables' collations.

### **Important**

You have to make sure that your database user has adequate privileges to run ALTER DATABASE and ALTER TABLE commands. If unsure, ask your host. Please do not post in our support forum with this question; we won't be able to help and we'll still tell you to ask your host.

TODO: SCREENSHOT

The interface is very simple. From the drop-down list please select your desired collation. By default, `utf8_general_ci` (the UTF-8 collation required by Joomla!) is selected. Then click on the Apply button.

## 11. Changing your Super Administrator ID

By default, Joomla! 1.5 creates a Super Administrator user with a user ID of 62 and a username of admin. Joomla! 1.6 creates such a user with an ID of 42 and a username of your choice. In either case, having a known user ID can compromise the security of your site. Creating just a new user will give it an id of 63 or 43 respectively, which is a hacker's next best bet. The real solution is to create a Super Administrator user with an ID in the 1-61 (Joomla! 1.5) or 1-41 (Joomla! 1.6) range. For more information regarding the security concerns of the default Super Administrator ID please take a look at my Joomla! Community Magazine article [<http://magazine.joomla.org/issues/Issue-Sept-2010/item/148-62-reasons-to-fire-your-super-admin>].

Admin Tools' Super Administrator ID feature allows you to fix this issue with a single click. Once you click its button, this is what happens:

- A new user is created with a random ID in the 1-61 (Joomla! 1.5) or 1-41 (Joomla! 1.6) range with the same username and password as the default Super Administrator account, i.e. user with ID 62 (Joomla! 1.5) or ID 42 (Joomla! 1.6).
- The old user's email, username and password are randomized, to prevent accidental logins under that account.
- The old user is blocked so that nobody can login using it

Remember to log out of your site's administrator area and then log in again after applying this change. If you don't, you might see that nothing loads or that whole pages of options remain blank. *This is normal and expected*. That's why we told you to log out of the administrator area in the first place.

### Important

We highly recommend editing the old user and demoting him to the "Registered" group. Due to the introduction of customizable ACLs in Joomla! 1.6 we can not perform that step reliably in an automated fashion.

## 12. SEO and Link Tools

This section of Admin Tools includes useful tools to improve your improve your site's SEO and handle your site's links. The list of features in this section is going to expand over time.

### Link migration

When you move your site across hosts, you may end up with broken intra-site links. Most of the times, this is caused by either putting absolute links or moving the site into a different directory name than it used to be.

In the first case, let's say you move your site from `www.example.com` to `www.example.org`. If you copied links from your browser's address bar and pasted them into your content or menus you're stuck with a bunch of links referencing the `www.example.com` domain name, i.e. `http://www.example.com/somepage.html`. Finding and changing those links is a mighty task, especially if you have thousands of content items.

In the latter case, which is the most common, the typical scenario goes like this. You develop your site locally, accessing it as `http://localhost/mysite`. Then you move your site to a live server with an address like `http://`

`www.example.com`. Suddenly, all of your links and images are broken! Why? All WYSIWYG Joomla! editors create relative URLs. For example, linking to `images/stories/image.jpg` creates a link like `/mysite/images/stories/image.jpg` in your content's HTML source code. If you take a good look at this URL, you'll immediately notice the `/mysite` prefix. This works perfectly on your local server, as your site is inside the `/mysite` directory of your web root, but breaks on the live site as you are restoring to the web root itself! Again, finding all those references and changing them is a mighty task.

Might task it isn't anymore! Admin Tools Link Migration feature comes to your rescue. First, set the Enable link migration option to Yes in order to enable the feature. In the Old locations text area you will have to enter the domain names or subdirectories where your site used to live, one on each line. For example, if your site was hosted on `http://www.example.com`, you have to enter `www.example.com` on one line (that is, without the `http://` or `https://` prefix!). If you want to work around relative URLs, enter the both the full URL and directory, one at each line, i.e. `http://localhost/mysite` on one line and `/mysite` on another line. Admin Tools will work its magic, migrating your URLs to point to your new site, on-the-fly as Joomla! is generating your site's pages.

## Important

Please remember to clear your Joomla! cache and your browser's cache after enabling this feature in order to see the changes in your browser when you reload your site's pages.

## Tools

When you access your site over SSL (HTTPS) you might end up with a "partially encrypted page" warning on several browsers. This happens because some resources, such as Javascript, CSS or external pages (maps, calendars) loaded in IFRAMEs are accessed over HTTP. It is usually extremely difficult to spot all of them and change them. Some are outright impossible to change unless you edit the code of the extension which produces them. Not any more. Just enable the Convert all links to HTTPS when site is accessed over SSL option and Admin Tools will automatically convert all HTTP URLs to HTTPS URLs when your site is accessed over SSL (HTTPS). This will make the partially encrypted page warnings finally go away.

# 13. URL Redirection

## Note

This feature is only available in the Professional release

Sometimes you need to create short, memorable URLs to some of your site's pages which Joomla!'s co-founder Brian Teeman calls PEF (Pub Ear Friendly). Arguably, telling someone to visit `http://www.example.com/downloads` is much easier than telling them to visit `http://www.example.com/index.php?option=com_downloads&view=repository&task=list` or even `http://www.example.com/site-resources/download.html`. Some other times you would like to use a short URL to an external site but do not wish to use one of the free services, like `bit.ly`, `ow.ly`, `t.co` or `tinyurl.com` for privacy reasons. Admin Tools to the rescue! The custom URL redirection feature allows you to do all of the above with a ridiculously simple interface.

Existing URL	New URL	Order	Published
<input type="text"/> <input type="button" value="Go"/> <input type="button" value="Reset"/>	<input type="text"/> <input type="button" value="Go"/> <input type="button" value="Reset"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="button" value="- Select state -"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="http://www.google.com">http://www.google.com</a>	<a href="#">google</a>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Display # 20

The main administration page shows you a list of the custom URL redirections defined on your sites. Each entry consists of the following information:

- The left hand checkbox. The toolbar operations will apply only to the checked items.
- Existing URL. The URL where your visitors will be taken to. Clicking on it will open it in a new window so that you can preview the results.
- New URL. The relative path on your site which triggers the redirection. For example, if your site is accessible at `http://www.example.com/joomla` and this field reads `search/google`, then all requests to `http://www.example.com/joomla/search/google` will be redirected to the Existing URL with a 301 (Permanently Moved) HTTP status code, to keep search engines happy. Clicking on the displayed value will open the Edit/Add page so that you can edit the entry.
- Order. The order with which the custom redirections will be processed.
- Published. When unpublished, the redirection will not take place. Useful to temporarily take down a redirection without deleting it.

When adding a new entry or editing an existing entry, the following page appears:

There are three fields to edit:

**Existing URL**      An existing URL on your site, or a link to an external page.

When using a URL in your own site you do not have to include the URL to your site's root. Use the relative path instead. For example, putting `index.php?option=com_frontpage` is sufficient to display the front-end component. You can use either an `index.php` URL or a SEF URL (as long as you have SEF URLs turned on in your Global Configuration!).

The biggest strength of this feature is the ability to enter external links. For instance you can enter `http://www.google.com` to redirect your visitors to Google's search page. Using this powerful feature allows you to run your private URL shortening service on your own domain!

**New URL**      The relative path which triggers the redirection. For example, if your site is accessible as `http://www.example.com/joomla`, entering `google` in this field will cause the URL `http://www.example.com/joomla/google` to redirect to the the URL you entered in the Existing URL field above. You can use subdirectories in your path, e.g. `search/external/google`.

**Published**      When unpublished, the redirection will not take place. Useful to temporarily take down a redirection without deleting it.

Use the Save button to save the changes and go back to the administration page, Save & New to save the changes and start entering the information for a new redirection, Apply to save the changes and return to this editor page and Cancel to discard all changes and return th the administration page.

## 14. Cleaning your temporary files directory

Your Temporary Files directory (called *Temp-directory* in your site's Global Configuration page) is the directory where Joomla! and its extensions put all transient files when installing software or performing other kinds of file manipulation activities. One problem with that directory is that sometimes files can get stuck in it, for example after a failed update. This not only causes a space problem —as these files take up valuable disk space— but can also compromise your site's security as these files may contain potentially sensitive information, or may be executable PHP files. While the latter issue can be usually worked around by using the front-end protection mode in the .htaccess Maker feature of Admin Tools Professional, the proper solution is to periodically clean the contents of that directory.

Admin Tools Core and Admin Tools Professional include the Clean Temp-directory feature which will do that for you with a single click! More specifically, it will automatically remove all files and directories from your Temp-directory except `index.html` and `.htaccess`, if any of those files exists.

## 15. Protecting Admin Tools with a password

Sometimes you are not the sole administrator of a website, for example when there is a large administrative team or when you build the website for a client. In such cases you do not need everyone with back-end access to be able to modify Admin Tool's settings. Instead of giving you the traditional "all or nothing" access control imposed by Joomla! user groups, Admin Tools allows you to control access to any or all of its features using a "master password". The idea is that before any user is able to use one of the protected features, he has to supply the "master password" in Admin Tools' control panel page.

Protected Features	
Password-protect Administrator	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes
Anti-spam Bad Words	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes
Database Tools	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes
Emergency Off-Line	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes
Fix Permissions	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes
Permissions Configuration	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes
.htaccess Maker	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes
Site IP Blacklist	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes
Administrator IP Whitelist	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes
Joomla! Core Update	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes
Security Exceptions Log	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes
URL Redirection	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes
Live Update	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes
Web Application Firewall	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes
Configure	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes

When you click on the Master Password button in the Control Panel you get to the Master Password page where you can set both the password and select which features to protect.

The top area of the page allows you to set a Master Password. If you want to disable password protections, simply leave it blank.

The bottom area of the page lets you select which features will be protected. Set the radio button next to each feature you want to protect to "Yes" before clicking on the Save button. Features marked as "No" will be accessible by all back-end users (Managers, Administrators and Super Administrators). Features marked with "Yes" will only be available to users who enter a valid password in the Control Panel page. This means that even Super Administrators will not be able to access the protected features without supplying a valid password.



If you want to quickly protect all features, click on the All button above the list. Conversely, clicking on the None button will disable Master Password protection on all features.

## I have forgotten my password. Now what?

The only way to find out your password is to directly read it from the database. Use your host's database management tool —usually it's phpMyAdmin— to list the contents of your site's `jos_components` table (where `jos_` is your site's prefix). Find the record whose link column contains `option=com_admintools` and take a peek at the contents of the `params` column. It contains several lines. One of them begins with `masterpassword=`. The rest of the line is your password.

## 16. Access Control

Admin Tools is able to run on a variety of Joomla! based CMS system, including Joomla!™ 1.5, Joomla! 1.6, Nooku Server and Molajo. Since version 2.0, it's restricted to users with Super Administrator privileges by default.

That said, many web professionals asked for a way to setup Admin Tools in a way that makes it possible for their clients to administer specific features only without the need for a Master Password. In order to cope with this requirement, Admin Tools includes fine-grained access control (ACL) since version 2.0. The exact ACL method is specific to the platform it's running on.

### 16.1. Joomla! 1.5, Nooku Server and other Joomla! 1.5 distributions

When Admin Tools runs on Joomla! 1.5, Nooku Server or any other CMS distribution based on Joomla! 1.5, there are two levels of access control: component access and per-user ACL (permissions) settings.

The first level of access control defines who can access the component at all, i.e. who can see its interface. In order to configure it, go to Components, Admin Tools and click on the Access Control button. Look for the Minimum access level option on the top of the page. Each one of the three options has the following meaning:

Super Administrator	Only Super Administrators can access the component
Administrator	Only users in the Administrator or Super Administrator group can access the component
Manager	Any user with back-end access (Manager, Administrator or Super Administrator) can access the component

Please note that this setting has precedence over the per-user ACL. This means that if you set this setting to Super Administrator, an Administrator will not be able to use Admin Tools even if you grant him all permissions in the per-user ACL settings.

The second level of access control is per-user ACL. By default Super Administrator can do everything, Administrators have no access to security settings and Managers can only use some utility functions. This feature allows you to have fine grained control over what each user can and can not do. To access it go to Components, Admin Tools and click on the Access Control button. You will see a list with all users granted back-end access (Managers, Administrators and Super Administrators). On each row, you will see the following columns:

Username	The username this row applies to
Group	Which user group (Manager, Administrator, Super Administrator) this user belongs to

Utility	A green check means that the user can use the utility features of Admin Tools. A white X in red background means he has no access to those features. The features affected are: cleaning the temporary directory, component access (Control Panel), Emergency Off-Line Mode, fixing and configuring permissions, Joomla! core update, URL redirections, SEO and link tools.
Maintenance	A green check means that the user can use the database maintenance features of Admin Tools. The features affected are: changing the administrator user ID, changing the database collation, changing the database prefix, session cleanup and table optimization.
Security	A green check means that the user can use the security features of Admin Tools. The features affected are: access control, administrator password protection, Web Application Firewall setup and associated tools (anti-spam bad words filtering, geo blocking, IP white and black list, log view), .htaccess Maker and Master Password.

## 16.2. Joomla! 1.6, Molajo and other Joomla! 1.6 distributions

Joomla! 1.6 comes with a very powerful and somewhat complex ACL system on its own. Admin Tools is designed to make full use of it. In order to access the ACL setup, go to Components, Admin Tools and click on the Options button in the toolbar. Then, click on the Permissions tab. Each group can be setup with the following privileges:

Configure (the one on top)	Allows access to Component Parameters button. This is a core Joomla! privilege.
Access Component	Self explanatory. If a user doesn't have this privilege, he won't be able to access the component! This is a core Joomla! privilege.
Utility	The user can use the utility features of Admin Tools. The features affected are: cleaning the temporary directory, component access (Control Panel), Emergency Off-Line Mode, fixing and configuring permissions, Joomla! core update, URL redirections, SEO and link tools.
Maintenance	The user can use the database maintenance features of Admin Tools. The features affected are: changing the administrator user ID, changing the database collation, changing the database prefix, session cleanup and table optimization.
Security	The user can use the security features of Admin Tools. The features affected are: access control, administrator password protection, Web Application Firewall setup and associated tools (anti-spam bad words filtering, geo blocking, IP white and black list, log view), .htaccess Maker and Master Password.

We won't go into more details regarding the ACL setup on Joomla! 1.6. If you want more information about how the ACL system works in Joomla! 1.6, please consult its documentation or ask on the Joomla! forums.

## 17. The "System - Admin Tools" plugin

### Note

The scheduling features of this plugin are only available in the Professional release. The Core release does need the plugin to be enabled for the SEO and Link Tools features to work.

The "System - Admin Tools" plugin, or `plg_admintools` for short, has a dual role for the Professional release of Admin Tools. On one hand it is necessary for the correct operation of the Web Application Firewall and URL Redirections features of Admin Tools. On the other hand it allows you to schedule various aspects of your site's maintenance.

You can access the plugin's configuration parameters by going to your back-end's Extensions, Plugin Manager menu item. Then find the item System - Admin Tools on the list and click on it. The standard Joomla! plug-in configuration page opens.

**Details**

<b>Name:</b>	System - Admin Tools
<b>Enabled:</b>	<input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes
<b>Type:</b>	system
<b>Plugin File:</b>	admintools.php
<b>Access Level:</b>	Public Registered Special
<b>Order:</b>	1 (System - Admin Tools)
<b>Description:</b>	Handles URL redirections defined in Admin Tools, fends off common attacks and automates session table and cache clean-up

On the left-hand side of the administrator area you can find the standard Joomla! controls. First, make sure that Enabled is set to Yes. Then, in order for the plugin to be published in the correct order, select 0 - First from the Order drop-down list.

**Parameters**

▼ Plugin Parameters

<b>Enable Session Optimizer</b>	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes
<b>Run every X minutes</b>	60
<b>Enable Session Cleaner</b>	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes
<b>Run every X minutes</b>	60
<b>Enable Cache Cleaner</b>	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes
<b>Run every X minutes</b>	1440
<b>Enable Cache Auto-expiration</b>	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes
<b>Run every X minutes</b>	60

The right hand side is where all the important functionality can be scheduled. You have the following options:

Enable Session Optimizer	When enabled, the Session Optimizer will be scheduled to run automatically. This feature will repair and optimize Joomla!'s sessions table.
Run every X minutes	How often to run the Session Optimizer feature, in minutes
Enable Session Cleaner	When enabled, the Session Cleaner will be scheduled to run automatically. This feature will purge (completely empty) and optimize Joomla!'s sessions table. Watch out! This will automatically log all users out of your site! You should only use it on sites where you don't expect to have logged in users at all, e.g. a company presentation site.

Run every X minutes	How often to run the Session Cleaner feature, in minutes
Enable Cache Cleaner	When enabled, the Cache Cleaner will be scheduled to run automatically. This feature will try to purge (completely empty) Joomla!'s cache. This is not possible on occasions, especially if you are using a cache adapter which doesn't support purging.
Run every X minutes	How often to run the Cache Cleaner feature, in minutes
Enable Cache Auto-expiration	When enabled, the Cache Auto-expiration will be scheduled to run automatically. This feature will try to expire and delete stale items in Joomla!'s cache. Unlike the Joomla! built-in feature, it will try to run this operation across all caches. This is not possible on occasions, especially if you are using a cache adapter which doesn't support automatic expiration control.
Run every X minutes	How often to run the Cache Auto-expiration feature, in minutes

All expiration options are best-effort scheduled. This means that they will try to run every X minutes, but only as long as there is visitor traffic to trigger them. In any other case they will defer their execution for when there is visitor traffic.

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# Appendix A. GNU General Public License version 3

Version 3, 29 June 2007

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The precise terms and conditions for copying, distribution and modification follow.

# TERMS AND CONDITIONS

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To “modify” a work means to copy from or adapt all or part of the work in a fashion requiring copyright permission, other than the making of an exact copy. The resulting work is called a “modified version” of the earlier work or a work “based on” the earlier work.

A “covered work” means either the unmodified Program or a work based on the Program.

To “propagate” a work means to do anything with it that, without permission, would make you directly or secondarily liable for infringement under applicable copyright law, except executing it on a computer or modifying a private copy. Propagation includes copying, distribution (with or without modification), making available to the public, and in some countries other activities as well.

To “convey” a work means any kind of propagation that enables other parties to make or receive copies. Mere interaction with a user through a computer network, with no transfer of a copy, is not conveying.

An interactive user interface displays “Appropriate Legal Notices” to the extent that it includes a convenient and prominently visible feature that (1) displays an appropriate copyright notice, and (2) tells the user that there is no warranty for the work (except to the extent that warranties are provided), that licensees may convey the work under this License, and how to view a copy of this License. If the interface presents a list of user commands or options, such as a menu, a prominent item in the list meets this criterion.

## 1. Source Code.

The “source code” for a work means the preferred form of the work for making modifications to it. “Object code” means any non-source form of a work.

A “Standard Interface” means an interface that either is an official standard defined by a recognized standards body, or, in the case of interfaces specified for a particular programming language, one that is widely used among developers working in that language.

The “System Libraries” of an executable work include anything, other than the work as a whole, that (a) is included in the normal form of packaging a Major Component, but which is not part of that Major Component, and (b) serves only to enable use of the work with that Major Component, or to implement a Standard Interface for which an implementation is available to the public in source code form. A “Major Component”, in this context, means a major essential component (kernel, window system, and so on) of the specific operating system (if any) on which the executable work runs, or a compiler used to produce the work, or an object code interpreter used to run it.

The “Corresponding Source” for a work in object code form means all the source code needed to generate, install, and (for an executable work) run the object code and to modify the work, including scripts to control those activities. However, it does not include the work's System Libraries, or general-purpose tools or generally available free programs which are used unmodified in performing those activities but which are not part of the work. For example, Corresponding Source includes interface definition files associated with source files for the work, and the source code for shared libraries and dynamically linked subprograms that the work is specifically designed to require, such as by intimate data communication or control flow between those subprograms and other parts of the work.

The Corresponding Source need not include anything that users can regenerate automatically from other parts of the Corresponding Source.

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